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Under Green Leaves.

BY

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LONDON:
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO. FARRINGDON STREET;
NEW YORK: 18, BEEKMAN STREET.

1857.

PR
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CONTENTS.

ONE HALF-HOUR .. .. *Page* 1
LULLINGSWORTH 17
THE WINES 45
TWO HOUSES 49
THE BRIONY WREATH 50
THE INTERVIEW 56
THE LOVER'S DREAM OF THE WIND 62
DOWN UPON THE GREEN EARTH 64
THE STEPPING-STONES 67
THE MUSICIAN 69
KILRAVOCK TOWER 77
HORNYHAND 80
SHACKABACK 85
OBVERSE AND REVERSE 88
SUPPOSITIONS 94
THE COBBLER 97
TELL ME NO MORE 104
ENGLISH VIRTUES.. 106
GIDEON GREY 110
THE MOUNTAIN TORRENT.. 113
CASTLE ATHELSTONE 117
THE HAWTHORN AND THE IVY 119
THE VOLUNTARY 121
MEOPS 125

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BEAUTY AND LOVE .. .. *Page* 127
LOVE; NEW AND OLD 128
FAIREST AND DEAREST 130
THE MOUNTAIN-TOP 132
MIST 139
CRACKLETHORN 143
THE EGLANTINE 145
THE MEN OF THE NORTH 147
THE TREES 150
THE SONG OF THALIESSIN 162
ANGLING 165
CARELESS 169
JOAN OF ARC 170
STORM APPROACHING 173
THE RAPID STREAM 185
THE SAILOR'S WIFE 187
EACH BLOCK OF MARBLE IN THE MINE 193
THE SILENT HILLS 195
A WELCOME TO PEACE 199
PENDRAGON THE KING 201
THE RETURN HOME 204
TIME AND THE SPRING 207
MANNA 209
THE LAST QUARREL 212
FLOWERS IN THE STREAM 214
THE MOCK JEWELS 216
GOOD-NIGHT 222
HATE IN THE PULPIT 225
"LOVE WILL FIND OUT THE WAY" 227
THE GREAT CRITICS 230
THE SHIP 232
THOR'S HAMMER 234

Under Green Leaves.

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither!—

SHAKSPEARE.

Under Green Leaves.

ONE HALF-HOUR.

I.

Noon, from the village tower,—
  But ere the clock strike One,
Ay, ere one short half-hour,
  Deeds shall be done.
A warm and buzzing day,
Scented with new-mown hay,
And tremulous with song
Floating green woods among,—
Lovely to me, who lie
Under this happy sky,—

Tell me, oh, Spirit of Noon
  Haunting the turret-spire,—
What shall be done
  Ere thou expire?

II.

Over the sunny grass
A shadow delay'd to pass;
And with it came a sound
From the tree-tops to the ground,—
An echo's echo dying,
Or thought to a thought replying,
Or music of the mind
Not born of the summer wind,
That seem'd to give it breath.—
  And the song it made,
  In the greenwood shade,
Was a song of Life and Death,—
  Death in the shadow glancing,

Life in the sunshine dancing ;
Life and her sister Death.

III.

"The glad air throbs with music,
As suits a bridal day,
And the chimes are merrily ringing
From a thousand turrets grey.
Strew roses ! gather posies !
Youth goes on his lusty way.
The sad air sighs with music :
Hark to the under-boom !
Over a thousand dells,
Toll out the doleful bells ;
There's dust for the hungry tomb.
And lonely ships at sea
Have Death in their company,—
Bury the mariners in the deep !
And let their white bones rest,

Under the billows' breast,
Where none can come to weep.

IV.

"Many an infant born,
This pleasant summer morn,
Shall die ere evening fall.
And many a scheme that blows
As freshly as the rose,
Shall drop its leaflets all,
And wither where it grows,
Ere the next chime
Shall tell the time.
And many a desolate head,
Weary of all the world has taught,
Shall know the knowledge of the dead,
And things surpassing thought.

V.

"Crooning at her door
Sits the sailor's wife.
Oh, sweet is her song and low,
Like the ripple of streams that flow
Where the long sedge-grasses grow,
As she clasps her little child,
That she loves beyond her life,
To her heart so pure and mild,
And thinks of the coming day,
When he who is far away,
Shall come again,
Come again,
Like the sweet, sweet sunshine after the rain,
To guard and shield her as of yore,
To love and cherish her more and more,
Best joy in her world of pain.

VI.

"And he whom she loves so well,
More than her tongue can tell,
Is battling with the wave,—
The gaping, greedy, gluttonous wave,—
That sucks him down to the pitiless grave,
Far away out on the barren sea,
With none but the stars so cold,
And the moonlight silvery gold,
Looking down
From Heaven's high crown,
On his fierce death-agony.

VII.

"The son returns with hard-earn'd wealth,
To cheer his mother, whose locks are white;
And his mother was laid, with the turf on her breast,
In the churchyard yesternight.

The husband comes to the wife he loves,
And his little children dear;
And the wife hath fled to a stranger's bed,
Nor left him even a tear
To freshen his heart, that will shrivel with grief,—
Sapless—fruitless—sere.

VIII.

"Outside the castle-gate,
The beggar-woman sighs,
With her pale twins at her bosom,
And a light in her glaring eyes;
She thinks of the stately Duchess,
So beautiful to see,
On her prancing steed, in her hunting-gear
With her pages at her knee;
With her plume of ostrich feathers
That waves to the summer air;—

So young, so noble, and so rich,
So far from the reach of care.
And the beggar curses Fortune,
And thinks of her babes forlorn,
And fondles them, and hugs them,
And weeps that they were born.

IX.

"Inside the castle-gate,
The Duchess sits alone,
Her long brown hair dishevell'd,
And streaming to her zone:
She thinks of the beggar-matron,—
And sighs,—unhappy wife!
That not to her is given
One child to bless her life.
'I'd give,' quoth she, 'my jewels,
My castle, my domains,

My state, my rank, my title,
And all that appertains,
For one of the tender cherubs,
That she, beloved of Heaven,
Can fold to her fruitful bosom,
And feel a blessing given.
Oh, she is rich beyond me,
'Tis I alone am poor,
And starve in the midst of plenty!—
Oh, teach me to endure!'

X.

"A knave sits plotting and spinning
His coils and meshes dark,
Alone in his secret places,
Where he deems no eye shall mark.
He sows the seeds of evil
In his foglight, murk and dim,
That they may grow in the autumn shine,
Into ripe fresh fruit for him.

Let him coil and spin
His web of sin,
Let him plant and dig and sow!
Fate hath a besom that can sweep,
And fools may sow what wise men reap.
For the minutes ebb and flow,
Balancing as they go;
And every minute as it flies,
If it see a thousand knaves arise,
Beholds a thousand fall,—
The question solves,
The globe revolves,—
And God is over all!

XI.

"Great Cæsar sits alone,
Weary and full of care:
How shall his armies strive,
How shall his people thrive
In the battles that prepare,

Whose murmur comes from a distant land
To the under-tides of the air?
And shall he fall or stand,
And are his servants true?
And are his enemies too strong
For his right hand to subdue?
Weary and rack'd with thought,
He shuts himself alone,
And doth not know that his foe lies dead,
That his rival's power is nought,
That another is on his throne;
And that the high imperial head
That troubled the world shall throb no more;
But lies as pulseless as a stone
On the melancholy shore.

XII.

"He knoweth not of this:
He summons his armed men,

He passes the squadrons in review,
With their captains, ten times ten;
He sends them east and west
By the fiat of his word;
He grinds and taxes his docile realm,
Till its inmost heart is stirr'd,
And the props of his throne are shaken!—
Oh, vain—oh, worse than vain!
The heavens are black with tempest,
And he dreameth not of rain.
He looks far off for danger,
And arms lest it should burst,
While it slumbers at his footstool,
And in his hand is nursed.

XIII.

"A man with a brow care-furrow'd
And bright eyes gleaming proud,
Walks to and fro in his chamber,
And talks to himself aloud.

'I have play'd,' quoth he, 'and won,—
The deed of my life is done;
The hope of my youth and prime
Is ripe at its destined time:
I clutch the golden apple,
I hold my head on high;—
I thank thee, oh my Fortune,
And let the world go by;
For grief no more shall touch me!'
Oh fool! there's danger nigh!
Whatever grief thou'st borne,
Whatever pangs have torn
Thy desolate heart forlorn,
Are nothing to compare
With the brood of grief that nestle
At the core of thine apple fair.
They breed in thy happy fortune
Thy dearest hopes to cross;
Poor dupe! thy good is evil,
Thy victory is loss.

XIV.

"A young man sits lamenting
With his children at his knee,
And his fond true wife beside him:
'I'm a wretch!' quoth he;
'An evil fate pursues me;
Whate'er I touch I slay;
And this, my last reliance—
My chance, my hope, my stay—
Has died like the last year's blossoms,
Never to bloom again!'
Oh blind, to grieve at Fortune!
Oh sluggard, to complain!
The thing which thou hast lost
Was big with coming sorrow;
Joy dwelt on its lips to-day,
Grief grew in its heart for morrow.

Look up to Heaven, thou dreamer!
If smitten, thou art whole;
And learn that a pang surmounted.
Is healing to the soul."

XV.

Half-past twelve on the turret clock,
Thou'rt gone, oh Spirit of Noon!
With the last faint echoes of the chime,
That died in the woods of June.
Thou'rt gone, in thy robe of amber,
And diadem of flame,
To make the wide world's circuit—
Another, and yet the same;
To bear God's justice with thee,
And scatter it through the Earth;
To balance the wonder of our death
By the mystery of our birth;

To humble the exalted,
To turn the Wrong to Right,
And out of the gloom of Evil
To weave the web of Light.
Kind and beautiful Spirit,
Just and merciful Day,
Bearing thy God's commission,
To give and to take away!

March, 1855.

LULLINGSWORTH.

It is an ancient house :
Four hundred years ago
Men dug its basements deep,
And roof'd it from the wind ;
And held within its walls
The joyous marriage-feast,
The christening and the dance.
Four hundred years ago
They scoop'd and fill'd the moat,
Where now the rank weeds grow,
And waterlilies vie
In whiteness with the swans—
A solitary pair—
That float, and feed, and float,
Beneath the crumbling bridge
And past the garden-wall.

Four hundred years ago
They planted trees around
To shield it from the sun;
And still these oaks and elms,
The patriarchs of the wold,
Extend their sturdy boughs
To woo the summer breeze.
The old house, ivy grown,
Red, green, and mossy gray,
Still lifts its gables quaint;
And in the evening sun
Its windows, as of yore,
Still gleam with ruddy light
Reflected from the west.

Still underneath the eaves,
Or rafters of the porch,
The glancing swallow builds;
Still through its chimneys tall
Up streams the curling smoke

From solitary fires,—
For still the ancient race
Live in the ancient home,
But of their glory shorn,
And hastening to decay.

Their last descendant dwells,
Childless and very old,
Amid its silent halls:
He loves the lonely place,
Its furniture antique,
Its panels of rich oak
Worm-eaten and grotesque,
Its manuscripts and books,
Its pictures on the walls,
And carvings on the stair.
'Tis all he hath to love;
Its life hath pass'd away—
The beautiful human life—

And left him frail and sad,
A waif on Time's bleak shore.

No children in its courts
Carol, like happy birds,
The livelong summer day.
No maidens with blue eyes
Dream of the trysting-hour,
Or bridal's happier time.
No youths with glowing hearts
Muse, in its shady walks,
Of high heroic deeds,
Or glory to be sought
In perilous fields of fame.
The very dog is mute,
And slumbers on the hearth,
Too impotent to bark.
The cawing rooks alone
Maintain the song of life,
And prate amid the elms

With harsh rough colloquy—
A music in itself,
Or if not music, joy.

The Lord of Lullingsworth
Is lonely, not austere:
A melancholy man,
With long locks flowing white,
And back unbent by age,
Beloved, yet little known.
He seeks not intercourse—
But takes it if it comes—
Except with little babes,
Who gather round his path
Or cling about his knees—
And love, yet know not why,
The melancholy man.
These, and the village priest,
His almoner and friend,
Are all his confidants.

A generous hand he hath,
And giveth liberal dole—
How liberal no one knows.
A something for the school
Or for the village church;
A something for old friends
Who fall to penury;
Or ancient servitors,
Too feeble for their work;
A something for the State,
When Patriotism calls,
Or high Philanthropy;
A something for the needs
Of sickness and distress,
Of helpless orphan babes
And widows left forlorn;
A something for himself,
Perchance the least of all;—
So flows the stream of wealth,
That once more affluent

Ran in impetuous flood
And spent itself in pomp ;
But now, a quiet brook,
Trickles through by-ways green
And edges them with flowers.

The house hath many tales :—
Four hundred years of men,
Of human birth and death,
Of love, and faith, and hope,
Of glory and of shame,
And all that mortals feel,
Might yield large histories,
If there were tongues to tell.
But no one knows their scope.
The incidents are blurred,
Or else forgotten quite ;
Gone with the song of birds,
Or with the leaves that fell
In ancient centuries.

A few perchance survive
In mouldy chronicles,
Or hang upon the lips
Of parish pensioners.
But if you'd hear one tale,
Amid the multitude,
And gather on the shore
One little grain of sand,—
That grain a human life,—
Listen, and you shall hear
This old man's history.

'Twas forty years ago,
The Lord of Lullingsworth
Led home his happy wife,
The joy of all who saw,
The glory of his heart.
'Twas twenty years ago,
A pale and patient saint,
Still young and fair, she died,

And left him in the world,
A maze without a clue,
A tree without a root;
Yet not all desolate,
Nor utterly forlorn.

Four daughters and three sons,
The eldest sweet eighteen,
The youngest but a day,
Remain'd around his hearth
To cheer his downward path.
And much he loved them all;—
Much for their own dear sakes,
Much for their mother's, lost,
And much for love return'd.

He thought as he caress'd
Each infant in his arms,
And listen'd with delight
To every lisping word,

Sweeter than word full spoke,
And heard the sharp clear laugh
Of Innocence and Joy
Ring merry through the hall,
That Time had not the power
Or Circumstance the art
To make him cherish more
These links from Earth to Heaven,—
The children of the dead.

But each returning day
Beheld his love increase,
Until he sometimes fear'd
Such fond idolatry
Of creatures of the earth
Was blasphemy to Heaven.
But Love transcends the mind;
And Reason, if it strive
Against Love's high decree,
Strives but with spears of straw,

Against stone battlements ;
Or if it fly the strife,
It abdicates its throne,
And serves as minister
The king it might depose.

As each ingenuous heart
Expanded in his smile,
And each young intellect
Unfolded like a flower
Beneath the kindly beams
Of his paternal face,
He look'd around his hearth ;—
And though one vacant place
Threw o'er his happiness
The shade of bygone grief,
He counted all his flock,
And said within himself,—
" The world is good and fair,
And I am happy yet ;

Lord ! who hath given me these,
Preserve them one and all,
That I may train them up
To glorify Thy name,
And meet me, glorified,
At the appointed time,
Before Thy Throne of Grace."

So grew they in his sight,
His task, his hope, his joy,
His recompense of life ;
Till one unhappy morn
Insidious Fever crept,
A serpent, to his fold ;
And not content with one,
Snatched from his jealous arms
Three younglings of his flock,—
The sweetest,—best-beloved,—
The tendrils of his heart.
Not best-beloved in life,

But oh, far more than best,
When Death transfigured them,
And o'er the pallid clay
Threw his celestial robes.
None saw the father weep.
His face was always calm,
Serene, and sad as night,
Begemm'd with inner worlds
Of silent suffering.

Years passed; and from his lips
There issued no complaint.
Four treasures still remain'd,
Brought nearer to his heart
By thought of those in Heaven.
If to the little world
That watch'd his daily life,
And knew how good and brave
And generous he was,
There seem'd to be a change

In look, or word, or deed,
It was that in his eyes
Seem'd pity more benign;
In every word he spake
More genial sympathy,
And in his liberal hand
Beneficence more rich.

He had but tasted grief;—
The overbrimming cup
Was offered to his lips,
And he had drunk, and lived.
The cup was yet to drain;
And happy he the while,
That knew not, nor could dream
The misery of the draught.

Short were the history,
If told by fact, and date,
And sequence of event.

Long were the history,
If told by agonies
Endured from day to day
And bravely fought against,
Until the unequal strife
Made havoc in the halls
And garden of the soul;
Laid waste the pleasant paths,
And rooted up the flowers,—
Sweet flowers,—to bloom no more!
But long or short,—'tis sad,
As all life-histories are,
Could tongues interpret them.

Prop of his house, his son,
By high ambition fired,
Intolerant of ease,
Went forth in honour's ranks
To fight his country's foes.
He died the hero's death,

Waving a snow-white plume
To cheer his followers,
And planting on the breach,
Won by his bravery,
The flag without a peer;
His last words—"Victory!
My father! Bear him this;„—
(A locket of dark hair)
"And tell him how I died!"

Two other sons—fair boys—
As radiant as the morn,
And fresh as blooms of May,
Return'd from Eton's halls,
Greedy of holidays,
And joys of happy home.
They bathed themselves at noon,
In clear inviting stream.
They frolick'd on the shore,
They braved remoter depths,

They gamboll'd in the flood,
And turning on their backs,
Floated, with face to Heaven,
In easy luxury,
As white and pure as swans;
Then dived in daring sport,
And wantonness of strength,
For pebbles deep adown,
Which having gain'd, they threw
Up in the sunny air,
And caught them as they fell.
There was not in the world,
In all its wealth of life
And innocence and joy,
Two happier, brighter things,
More beautiful than they.

A sudden cry of pain
Rang through the mead a mile,
And startled at the sound,

The younger brother turn'd,
And saw his elder born
Battling the deeps for life,
And all his fair young face
Alight with agony.

Impulsive at a thought,
He swam, and grasp'd the hand
Outstretch'd in blind despair.
'Twas Death's convulsive throe!
The dying swimmer caught
That weak fraternal hand,
That fond fraternal neck,
And bore into the grave
The young and tender life,
For whose superior sake
He'd thrice have given his own

'Twas a short agony
That took them both to heaven.

Go to the village church,
You'll see their cenotaph,
A master-piece of art;
Lock'd in each other's arms
The marble seraphs lie;
Lovely in form and face,
But not so beautiful,
Or so divinely fair,
No, not by absent soul—
As those whose purity
They strive to shadow forth.

All thought this bitter grief
Would break the father's heart.
Perchance it did—none knew.
He travell'd into France,
To Italy and Spain,
He and his eldest born,
His loveliest and his last.

Oh, sweet beyond compare,
In roseate bloom of youth,
And dazzling womanhood,
She glitter'd at his side;
Men saw her in a crowd
And knew no other face;
And when she glided out
From church or festival,
They knew not how it was,
But felt that it was dark.

Before her brothers died
The maiden was betroth'd
To one her sire approved,
And would have chos'n himself
As helpmate of her life,
If she, with finer sense,
Had not from all mankind
Singled him out—true soul–
Her own soul's counterpart.

Time pass'd, and she was wed ;—
And happiness once more
Seem'd dawning o'erthe Hall,
To light its avenues
With human intercourse,
And cheer the sad old man.
Age dreams as well as youth ;
He hoped, he dream'd, he pray'd ;
That this beloved tree
Would blossom at its time,
And bear its tender fruit—
The blooms of wedded life—
Through all his latest years,
To make him blest amends
For dearer treasures lost.

Fond hope, that never grew
To hope's fruition fair !
The Rose so full of sweets,
The Rose so fondly prized,

So beautiful and frail,
Bore one untimely bud,
And perish'd where she grew,
Leaving two hearts forlorn,—
One young, with strength, mayhap,
To live and love anew;
One sad and weary old,
Too old to hope again.

How merciful is Heaven:
The oak foredoom'd to brave
Five hundred years of storm,
Grows hard and rough of kind,
And finds in storm itself
A sustenance and power.
The blind man's universe,
Uncheer'd by light of Heaven,
By man's or Nature's face,
Throbs with ecstatic sound
And music of the spheres.

And in our daily life,
The arrows aim'd to kill,
The accidents, the pit,
The perilous fire or flood,
Receive not every day
The victims they demand.
The arrow, warp'd aside,
Avoids Achilles' heel,
And guardian angels fly
On wings of sudden thought,
Or come, life messengers
In God's electric car,
Whose wheels are impulses,
To lead us unperceived
Beyond the crowded path
Where ambush'd dangers lie;
To heal th'envenom'd wound,
Or shield us from the blow.

The kind and tender heart

Broke not, but bore its grief;
And Patience, like a crown,
Shone on his wrinkled front,
And mark'd him for a king.
But if the heart escaped,
The delicate brain gave way.
An atom was displaced
From Reason's perfect throne;
Th'intangible chord was snapp'd
Which binds the soul to sense;
The clear aërial bells
That make sweet harmonies
In Thought's imperial dome,
Were smitten out of tune,
And yielded back no more
Their beautiful accord.

The balance of his mind
In all his common life,
In converse with the world,

In duty's ceaseless round,
In home or state affairs,
In courtesies complete,
Or high philosophy,
Preserved its evenness.
On one dark point alone
The balance was destroy'd.
On one pervading thought
The bells were out of tune—
If out of tune they were—
And not by spirit hands
Attuned, ineffable,
To higher harmonies
Than pure cold Reason dreams.

The children were not dead,
Nor she, the saint who bore!
The losing of the last,
Restored them all to life,
Young, beautiful, beloved,

As in the bygone time
When in his path they grew,
Companions of his hours.

All other creatures die;
The green earth covers them;
But in his waking thought
These live immortally,
And know not Death's embrace,
Nor cold Corruption's lip.
He sees them in his walks;
His wife still comforts him;
His little children still
Gambol about his feet,
And prattle in his ear.

Each day at morn and noon,
And at his evening meal,
His board is spread for nine;
His inner eyes behold

Eight spirits at his side,—
Each in the usual place,
Visible—palpable.
In their high company,
A calm pure happiness
Dwells in his soul serene,
And feeds itself on thoughts
Too great for utterance.
Life blossoms out of death;
Nothing shall part them more!

Thus God's great balances
Right every seeming wrong,
Atone for every ill,
And in the poison'd cup
Infuse the precious balm,
That out of transient pain
Makes lasting happiness.
Who knows this old man's joy?
None but himself, perhaps—

Perhaps not even he.
Thou who hast heard the tale
Believe that Heaven is just,
And bear thy lot resign'd.

THE WINES.

I.

Whence comest thou,
Oh lady rare,
With soft blue eyes
And flaxen hair,
And showers of ringlets
Clustering fair?
And what hast thou got
In that bowl of thine?
"I come," quoth she,
"From the beautiful Rhine,
And in my bowl
Is the amber wine.
Pure as gold
Without alloy,

Mild as moonlight,
  Strong as joy;
Taste, and treasure it—
Drink, but measure it—
  Thirsty boy!"

II.

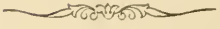
And who art thou,
  So ruddy and bright,
With round full eyes
  Of passionate light,
And clustering tresses
  Dark as night?
And what hast thou drawn
  From the teeming tun?
"I come," quoth she,
  "From the blue Garonne,
Where the vines are kiss'd
  By the bountiful sun,

And the regal Claret,
  Kind, though coy,
Flushes the hills
  With purple joy.
Taste, and treasure it—
Drink, but measure it—
  Thirsty boy!"

III.

And whence art thou,
  With bounding tread,
With cheeks like morning,
  Rosy red,
And eyes like meteors
  In thy head?
And what dost thou pour
  Like jewell'd rain?
"I come," quoth she,
  "From the sunny plain,

And bear a flagon
Of bright Champagne,—
Age's cordial,
Beauty's toy,—
Dancing, glancing,
Wine of Joy.
Taste, and treasure it—
Drink, but measure it—
Thirsty boy!"



TWO HOUSES.

"'Twill overtask a thousand men,
With all their strength and skill,
To build my Lord ere New Year's eve
His castle on the hill."
"Then take two thousand," said my Lord,
"And labour with a will."

They wrought, these glad two thousand men,
But long ere winter gloom,
My Lord had found a smaller house,
And dwelt in one dark room;
And one man built it in one day,
While bells rang ding, dong, boom!
Shut up the door! shut up the door!
Shut up the door till Doom!

THE BRIONY WREATH.

I.

I TWINED around my true love's brow,
Amid her dark brown hair,
A wreath of Briony from the hedge,
With rings and berries fair;
And call'd her "Lady Briony,"
And darling of the air.

II.

We walk'd like children, hand in hand,
Or on the meadow-stile
Sat down, not seeking happiness,
But finding it the while
In Love's unconscious atmosphere,
Or sunlight of a smile.

III.

"Sweet Lady of my heart," I said,
"Thou chid'st me in the morn,
For talking of the 'worthless weeds'
With unconsider'd scorn;
But now, for bonnie Briony's sake,
The chiding shall be borne.

IV.

"So pleasant are its tendril-rings,
That twist and curl and twine;
So graceful are its leaves and fruit
Amid those locks of thine;
Henceforth to me shall Briony
Be equal of the Vine."

V.

"But not for sake of me!" she said;
"I'd have thee just and true,

And love the wild weeds for themselves,
Sweet babes of sun and dew,
As virtuous as the Rose herself,
Or Violet blushing blue.

VI.

" Of all the weeds, and bounteous buds,
That drink the summer shower,
And lift their blossoms through the corn,
Or smile in hedge and bower,
I plead the cause ;—come hear the tale
And love them from this hour.

VII.

" You've call'd me Lady Briony ;
Behold my sisters bright,
My fair companions of the wood,
Who love the morning light,—
Valerian, Saffron, Camomile,
And Rue, and Aconite ;—

VIII.

"The golden Mallow of the Marsh,
The Hemlock, broad and rank,
The Nightshade, Foxglove, Meadow-sweet,
And Tansy on the bank,
And Poppy with her sleepful eyes,
And Water-Iris dank.

IX.

"Are we not fair? Despise us not!—
We soothe the couch of pain;
We bring divine forgetfulness
To calm the stormy brain;
And through the languid pulse of life
Drop healing, like the rain.

X.

"There's not a weed, however small,
That peeps where rivers flow,

Or in the bosom of the woods
Has privilege to grow,
But has some goodness in its breast,
Or bounty to bestow.

XI.

"And if we poison;—yours the fault!
Behold our green leaves wave,
And seem to sigh as men go past
Wayfarers to the grave;—
'Use us unwisely, we may kill,—
Use wisely, and we save.'

XII.

"Our virtues and our loveliness
Are none the less our own,
Because you fail to seek them out,
Or miss them when they're shown;
And if we're common, so is light,
And every blessing known."

XIII.

"Well pleaded, Lady Briony!
Thou'rt good as thou art fair;
And were there no one in the copse,
I'd kiss thy lips, I swear!"
Her laugh rang merry as a bell—
"Well, kiss me, if you dare!"

THE INTERVIEW.

I.

Heavily the rain-drops
  Beat the pane;
On the housetop hoarsely
  Creak'd the vane;
The wind came battering by,
Like fierce artillery
  Against a town;
Or with a fitful wail
Crept through the leafless vale
  Or moorland brown.

II.

In that wintry midnight,
Through the gloom,
I beheld a vision
In my room ;
I shudder'd at the sight,—
Its face in ghastly light
Familiar shone ;
And all its heart lay bare
As a landscape in the air,—
Mine own ! mine own !

III.

'Twas my face before me,
Pallid-hued ;
'Twas mine eyes beheld me
Where I stood.
Pointing its fingers thin,
This thing, with hideous grin,
And angry start,

Exclaim'd, "Thou knowest much;—
Knowest thou this,—I touch?"—
And touch'd its heart.

IV.

With a flash electric,
It became
Palpable before me
Like a flame;
And I could read and see
Its inmost mystery,
And breach of law;
Its guilty passion strong,
Its weakness hidden long,
And blackest flaw.

V.

Perfidies unnumber'd;
Secrets dire,
Written out and burning
As with fire;

The motives of a life,
Laid bare as with a knife,
Through quivering flesh;
Dead things that no man knew,
Most wretched, but most true,
Revived afresh.

VI.

All my love and madness;
All my guilt;
All my tears of anguish
Vainly spilt;
My agonies and fears;
The skeletons of years;
My hopes entomb'd;
My crimes; my broken truth;
Up from the deeps of youth
Before me loom'd.

VII.

"Hide it, cruel spirit,
Or I die!

'Tis too vile to look at
With life's eye!"—
I cover'd up my face;
Between me and its place
Came mist and cloud:
"And is this heart, my heart—
So foul in every part?"—
I groan'd aloud.

VIII.

Light broke in upon me
From afar;
And faith in God, high-shining
Like a star.
And when I look'd again,
I saw, amid the stain
Of that frail clay,
A glow of pure desire—
A spark of heavenly fire—
Burning alway.

IX.

"Shall I sit lamenting?—
Ah, not so!
Sympathy and pity
For men's woe,
A love surpassing death,
A calm but humble faith,
To me are given;
Accuser!—in this hour
My heart defies thy power,
With strength from Heaven!"

THE LOVER'S DREAM OF THE WIND.

"The Wind before it woos the Harp,
Is but the wild and tuneless air,
Yet as it passes through the chords,
Changes to Music rare."—T. POWELL.

I.

I DREAM'D thou wert a fairy Harp,
Untouch'd by mortal hand,
And I the voiceless, sweet west wind,
A roamer through the land.
I touch'd, I kiss'd thy trembling strings,
And lo! my common air
Throbb'd with emotion caught from thee,
And turn'd to music rare.

II.

I dream'd thou wert a Rose in bloom,
And I the gale of spring,
That sought the odours of thy breath,
And bore them on my wing.
No poorer thou, but richer I,—
So rich, that far at sea,
The grateful mariners were glad,
And bless'd both thee and me.

III.

I dream'd thou wert the Evening Star,
And I a lake at rest,
That saw thine image all the night
Reflected on my breast.
Too far!—too far!—come dwell on Earth,
Be Harp and Rose of May;—
I need thy music in my heart,—
Thy fragrance on my way.

DOWN UPON THE GREEN EARTH.

I.

Five hundred years the royal tree
Has waved in the woods his branches free;
But king no longer shall he stand,
To cast his shadow o'er the land;
The hour has come when he must die:
Down upon the green earth let him lie!

II.

No more beneath his spreading boughs
Shall lovers breathe their tender vows;
No more with early fondness mark
Their names upon his crinkled bark,

Or idly dream and softly sigh:
Down upon the green earth let him lie!

III.

The lightning stroke has o'er him pass'd,
And never harm'd him first or last;
But mine are strokes more sure, I trust,
To lay his forehead in the dust;
My hatchet falls—the splinters fly:
Down upon the green earth let him lie!

IV.

But yet, although I smite him down,
And cast to earth his forest crown,
The good old tree shall live again,
To plough deep furrows o'er the main,
And flaunt his pennant to the sky:
Down upon the green earth let him lie

V.

Full-breasted to the favouring breeze,
He shall be monarch of the seas,
And bear our Britain's triumphs far,
In calm or tempest, peace or war;
'Tis but to live that he must die:
Down upon the green earth let him lie!

THE STEPPING-STONES.

I.

Maiden on the stepping-stones
O'er the brawling river,
Pass, nor stop to gaze below;
Heed not how the waters flow,
Rolling on for ever.

II.

Shallow seeming, deep as death,
Rolls the haunted river;
Evil spirits in its wave
Lurk to drag thee to the grave.
Pitiless for ever.

III.

If thy garment's hem but touch
That exulting river,
If thy feet but stop to play
With a ripple on the way,
Thou art lost for ever.

IV.

Clear and pure it seems to run—
False deluding river!
At thy touch its waves will swell,
Frothing, foaming, each a well
Gurgling up for ever.

V.

Maiden on the stepping-stones
O'er the brawling river,
Pray to God to be thy guide
From the fiends on either side,
Tempting thee for ever.

THE MUSICIAN.

PART I.—EARTH-SORROWS.

THE melodies! the harmonies!
They fall from my fingers free,
Like rain where the tree-tops quiver,
Like hail on the rippling river,
Like sunbeams on the sea.
And there are thoughts within them,
And fancies fresh and young;—
But, alas! I cannot utter them
For failure of my tongue.
The melodies, the harmonies,
Unspoken and unsung!

I would I were a poet,
And that my thoughts could reach
The magic and the mystery,
And affluence of speech;—
That I might tell my secrets
And all that I could teach;—
Or that some kindly minstrel,
With thoughts akin to mine,
Would deign to sit beside me,
And help me to entwine
My music with his language
Into a chain divine,
That men might bind their hearts with,
Like a trellis'd vine.

But the melodies! the harmonies!
They die as they are born,
With none to understand them;—
So sweetly as I plann'd them,
In my joy forlorn!

The breath of an emotion
  And a happy pain,
They drop on the wide, wide ocean,
  Like the barren rain;
And when I would revive them,
  I look for them in vain.

PART II.—HELL-PAINS.

Oh, vile, vile catgut-scrapers,
  Tormentors of sweet Sound,
That bruise her, and destroy her,
  My queen, my goddess crown'd!
What has dear Music done,
  She that so loveth us,
Ye bloodless and stone-hearted,
  That you should use her thus?

Each movement of your arms
  Goes through me like a pang!—
Ye singers and horn-blowers,
  There's death in every twang!
'Twas surely Satan school'd you,
  And well you've learn'd your parts,
To vex, to plague, to torture
  Our unoffending hearts!

You could not be more cruel,
  If, wielding barbs and prongs,
You dug them in my bosom,
  And call'd the misery,—songs!
My ear is wrench'd and bleeding
  At every note you make;
Be silent—oh, be silent—
  For heavenly Pity's sake!

What would I give! what tribute
  Of worship and of tears,

If Song, as I have dream'd it,
  Could flow on my happy ears!
If one—one only singer,
  Amid this peopled earth,
Could understand my music
  As I who gave it birth;—
Such as my soul design'd it!—
  Alas! 'tis vain to seek;—
Men sing, and the hot blood rushes
  In madness to my cheek,
And women tear my heart out,
  As they squeal, and scream, and shriek.

Come, bore in my ear with corkscrews!
  Make every nerve a knot,
And pierce my brain with needles,
  If pain must be my lot;
But cease, oh! cease, in mercy,
  This misery supreme,
That Hell can never equal!—

And let me lie and dream
That to my soul, long-suffering,
Will due reward be given,—
My music sung by angels
Amid the choir of Heaven!

PART III.—HEAVEN-JOYS.

O Music! my delight!
My soul's supremest joy!
Let me lie to-night, to-night,
On thy bosom coy!
Let me lie all night awake,
Embalm'd in thy honey breath,
That wafts me up to Heaven,
In a wild ecstatic death.
Up! up! above the stars
With thee I float! I soar!

To the shadow of God's throne!
To the world-bespangled floor!
Where sit the white-robed seraphs,
Singing for evermore!

O Music! oh, my life!
How beautiful art thou!
With the Love in thy deep, deep heart,
And the Wisdom on thy brow!
As I play with the golden hair
That falls o'er thy shoulders fair,
I deem that every thread
To my toying fingers given,
Is a ray of sunlight spread,
Or a string from the Harp of Heaven.
I feel thy beating heart,
And know, sweet lady mine,
That it throbs to the march of worlds,
With a harmony divine.

I touch ; but dare not kiss thee,
For the glow of thy burning eyes,
Lest I should yield my spirit
In my speechless ecstasies,
And be slain like a mortal lover
Who dares to raise his thought
To the beauty of a goddess,
Loving, but lightning-fraught !

Yet, since I'm born to die,
And to float into the Past,
Let me die on thy beating bosom,
My bride, my first and last!
Drinking thy whisper'd rapture,
Let me faint upon thy breast,
And melt away in echoes,
Immortal with the blest !

KILRAVOCK TOWER.

Forlorn old tower! that lookest sadly down
Upon the river glittering in the light,
Upon the green leaves of the clambering woods,
And o'er the wide expanse of mountain-land,
How many tales thine ancient walls might tell!
And yet, thou silent undivulging tower,
What couldst thou tell us that we do not know?
The matter of all history is the same.
Time in all changes can but iterate
The morn and eve, the noon-time and the night,
The spring's fresh promise and the autumnal fruit,
The leaves of summer and the winter's snow.
And human story still repeats itself,—
The form may differ, but the soul remains.

Four hundred years ago, when thou wert built,
Men err'd and suffer'd ;—Truth and Falsehood waged
One with the other their perpetual war ;—
And Justice and Injustice, Right and Wrong,
Succumb'd and triumph'd as they do to-day.
The young heart loved with passionate earnestness,
The old heart scorn'd all follies but its own ;
And Joy and Sorrow—Jealousy—Revenge—
Lusty Ambition—skulking Avarice—
Patience and Zeal—and persecuting Rage—
Pity and Hope—and Charity and Love—
All good and evil passions of the mind,
Brighten'd or darken'd—oh, thou mouldering wall!
Through all the landscape of humanity.

Couldst thou divulge whatever thou hast seen,
Thou couldst but call these spirits from the Past
To read us lessons.—Ancient Tower! thy voice
Need not instruct us ; for we look around
On highways or on byways of our life,

And find no sorrow of the ancient days
Unparallel'd in ours; no love sublime,
No patient and heroic tenderness,
No strong endurance in adversity,
No womanly or manly grace of mind,
That we could not, if every truth were known,
Match with its fellow in our later days.
So keep, old Tower, thy secrets to thyself!
There's not a hovel in the crowded town,
That could not tell us tomes of histories
Of good and evil, wonderful as thine.

KILRAVOCK, NAIRNSHIRE.

HORNYHAND.

I.

How now, Hornyhand,
Toiling in the crowd,
What is there in thee or thine
That thou scornest me and mine—
Looking down so proud?
Thou'rt the bee, and I'm the drone!—
Not so,—Hornyhand!—
Sit beside me on the sward;—
Where's the need to stand?
And we'll reason, thou and I,
'Twixt the green grass and the sky.

II.

Thou canst plough and delve,
Thou canst weave and spin,
On thy brow are streaks of care,
Iron-grey 's thy scanty hair
And thy garments thin ;—
Were it not for such as thou,
Toiling morn and night,
Luxury would lose its gauds,
And the land its might ;
Mart and harbour would decay,
Tower and temple pass away.

III.

Granted, Hornyhand !
High 's the work you do ;—
Spring-time sowing, autumn tilth,
And the red wine's lusty spilth,
Were not but for you.

Art and arms, and all the pride
Of our wealth and state,
Start from Labour's honest hands,—
Labour high and great,
Sire of Plenty, friend of Mirth,
Master of the willing Earth.

IV.

Yet, good Hornyhand,
Why shouldst thou be vain?
Why should builder, ploughman, smith,
Boastful of their strength and pith,
Scorn the busy brain?
Working classes, self-bedubb'd!—
As if none but they
Labour'd with incessant toil,
Night as well as day,
With the spirit and the pen,—
Teachers, guides, and friends of men!

V.

Drones there are, no doubt;—
Yet not all who seem:
Flesh and blood are not the whole,
There's a honey of the soul,
Whatsoe'er thou deem.
Is the man who builds a book,
That exalts and charms,
Not as good as he who builds
With his brawny arms?
What were Labour but for Thought?—
Baseless effort, born of nought!

VI.

Many a noble heart,
Many a regal head,
Labours for our native land
Harder than the horniest hand
For its daily bread.

Painter, poet, statesman, sage,
Toil for human kind,
Unrewarded but of Heaven,
And the inner mind.
Thou recantest ?—So !—'Tis done !
Pass from shadow into sun !

SHACKABACK.

This term is applied, in some of the rural districts of England, to a lazy fellow, who loves to doze in the sunshine rather than to work, and who would rather poach than plough.

I.

They call me Shackaback ;—
Shackaback ;—
And knave and lazy loon,
Because, though hale and strong,
I'm idle all day long,
And carol to the glimmer of the moon.
Let them rail, Shackaback !
There is money in thy sack,
Quite enough for the needs of to-day ;
Let the angry Justice growl,
And the Overseer howl—
While it lasts, Shackaback will play.

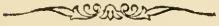
II.

It may be, Shackaback,—
Shackaback,—
That heedless of the morn,
Thou'rt as happy as "my Lord,"
Or "his Worship" at the board,
Or the Lawyer, money-grubbing and forlorn.
Let them grub, Shackaback!
There are blossoms on thy track;—
'Tis something to have nothing, yet be gay,—
To lie upon the grass,
And to watch the shadows pass,
Without debts to gather in, or to pay!

III.

They say that Shackaback,—
Shackaback,—
Goes out, when nights are clear,

With the musket or the snare,
For the partridge or the hare,
With his comrades "in the season of the year."
Have they proof, Shackaback?
If they have, why, then good lack!—
I can travel like my betters—and away!
And if not, why, let them rail—
I've my bacon and my ale,
And leisure to be merry while I may!



OBVERSE AND REVERSE.

PART I.—THE EMPRESS.

I.

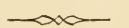
Scant and frosty is my hair,
Age and care
Clog my pulses, thin my blood,—
I would give my royal crown,
Gem-bestud,
Purple robes and ermine-down,
For the tresses rich and brown
Of a clown:
I would yield up gold and pearl,
For the bright eyes of a girl;

Prosperous counties—all my wealth,
For a country maiden's health;
Duchies wide—
All my pride—
All my armies—all my ships,
For the blood of youthful lips.

II.

At my palace-window oft—
Up aloft,
Looking down the crowded street.
I behold the maidens go,
Brisk of feet
To the market or the show,
Laughing, tripping to and fro
In a row;
And could hate them—woe is me,—
For their light limbs moving free,
For their brisk elastic tread,
For their cheeks like cherries red,

For their hair
Flowing fair!—
Oh! the May-time I have lost;
Oh! the nipping of the Frost!



PART II.—THE SEMPSTRESS.

I.

I WISH I were an Empress,
And had a crown to wear,
A stomacher of diamonds,
And pearls to deck my hair,
And a train of purple velvet
For noblemen to bear.

II.

I wish I were an Empress,
And sat upon a throne,
Receiving great ambassadors
From every clime and zone;
With princes at my footstool
To make my pleasure known.

III.

I wish I were an Empress,
And rode a prancing bay,
Amid my people shouting
And garlanding my way;
With trumpeters before me—
Tooroo!—Tooroo!—Tooray!

IV.

I wish I were an Empress—
The glory of the land,

With half a dozen monarchs
Contending for my hand,
Which I should scorn to give them—
Let all men understand;

V.

Which I should scorn to give them,
As far too great a prize,
Unless to some one handsome,
And brave, and good, and wise,
Who loved me more than kingdoms,
For the twinkle of mine eyes.

VI.

I wish I were an Empress,
My crown upon my head;—
I'd feed the poor man's orphans
Who lack'd their daily bread,
And give each maid a dowry,
Who needed one to wed.

VII.

I wish I were an Empress—
  Alas, my cruel fate !
I'm nothing but a pretty girl,
  And toil both hard and late,
And waste my youth in sighing—
  Too poor to find a mate !

SUPPOSITIONS.

That Earth's no Paradise
We know as well as you,
What then? you dark dull soul!
Suppose in the deep blue sky
There never was seen a star,
Suppose the bounteous Earth
No more brought forth a flower,
And trees were barren sticks—
Like you, my worthy friend!—
And never put out a leaf
To wave in the summer wind;—
And suppose the free fresh air
Were stagnant as a pool;—
'Tis possible you might live—
But where would be the charm

Of the garden and the fields
And the beauty of the sky?
And, coming to nearer things,
Suppose there were no grass
To cover the naked clay;
Suppose the birds were mute,
And nightingales and larks
Were dumb as perch or trout;
And suppose there were no dogs
To look in the face of man,
Confiding and beloved;
No horses and no kine
To minister to his use?
You could live—'twere vain to doubt—
Like the oyster on the bank,
And prize your grovelling life
And cling to it, if Death
Untimely summon'd you
To quit its stagnant shore;—
But many a true delight,

And many an innocent charm,
And many a thing of joy
Would leave the world less fair
To men of finer mould,
Though fit enough for you.
  Go away, grumbler! go!
And ere you talk again
Of the utter misery
And darkness of the world,
Be grateful for the flowers.
And if your purblind eyes,
My most respectable friend!—
Can dare to look so high,
Be thankful for the stars.

THE COBBLER.

Ben Arthur, or the Cobbler, rises in great majesty and grandeur at the head of Loch Long to the height of 2,400 feet—his fantastic peak cracked and shattered into every conceivable form. From one point it resembles the figure of a cobbler. Hence the popular name of the mountain.—*Tourists' Guide.*

I.

Far away! up, in his rocky throne,
The gaunt old Cobbler dwells alone.
Around his head the lightnings play
Where he sits with his lapstone, night and day,
No one seeth his jerking awl,
No one heareth his hammer fall;
But what he doth when mists enwrap
The bald and barren mountain-top,
And cover him up from the sight of man,
No one knoweth—or ever can.

II.

Oft in the night, when storms are loud,
He thunders from the drifting cloud,
And sends his voice o'er sea and lake
To bid his brother Bens awake ;
And Lomond, Lawers, and Venue,
Answer him back with wild halloo ;
And Cruachan shouts from his splinter'd peaks,
And the straths respond when the monarch speaks ;
And hill with hill and Ben with Ben,
Talk wisdom—meaningless to men.

III.

And oft he sings, this Cobbler old,
And his voice rings loud from his summits cold,
And the north wind helps him with organ-swell,
And the rush of streams as they leap the fell.
But none interprets right or wrong
The pith and burden of his song,

Save one, a weird and crazy wight,
Oppress'd with the gift of the second sight,
Who tells the shepherds of Glencroe
What the Cobbler thinks of our world below.

IV.

"Cobble?" he saith, "we cobble all,
Wise and simple, great and small.
The king from under his golden crown,
Over his troubled realm looks down,
For the state machine is out of gear,
And grates and creaks on the people's ear:
'Cobble it up!' he cries, forlorn,
'To last us till to-morrow morn;
'Twill serve my time if that be done—
Cobble and patch—and let it run!'

V.

"And statesmen look—the cold and proud—
On the sweating, moiling, groaning crowd,

And hear the murmur, hoarse and deep,
Of the discontent that will not sleep;
And half reluctant, half afraid,
To touch the ills themselves have made,
They take the bristle and awl in hand,
And cobble, cobble, through the land.
'Strike your hammers, wax your thumbs,
After us the deluge comes!

VI.

"The sage puts out his sleepy head,
From the hole in the wall where he was bred,
And looks at the world, that seems to him
To be going wrong in the foglight dim.
'A shoe!' quoth he, 'an ancient shoe,
Letting the mire and the water through.
I can mend it, I opine,
I've the leather, the wax, the twine;
I'm the man for the public weal,
Patch and cobble it, toe and heel!'

VII.

"From ancient days till Time's last hour
Your cobblers have been men of power.
Your Alexander, who was he?
As great a cobbler as could be.
And who your kings of later birth,
The lords and demi-gods of earth?—
Your Tamerlanes, and Ghengis-Khans,
Your Peters, Pauls, and Suleimans?
And great Napoleons, red with gore?
Cobblers! cobblers! nothing more!

VIII.

"And from the very dawn of time,
In every country, age, and clime,
Who were the Solons, Zenos, Dracos?
Who the Stagyrites and Platos?
Who the stoics and the schoolmen,
Hammering words with *brutum fulmen?*

Who the metaphysic spouters,
Dark expounders, drifting doubters?
Great and little—sane ones, mad ones?—
Cobblers all! and very bad ones!

IX.

"And ye who seek to loose and bind,—
Ye great reformers of mankind,—
Who think the soul a mere machine,
That you can trim, and oil, and clean,
And all men's passions—broad as day—
But dust that you can brush away;
Who think you've all the skill and leather
To put a proper shoe together:
You're only cobblers like the rest,—
Bungling cobblers at the best."

X.

Sitting above the mountain-springs,
'Tis thus the ancient Cobbler sings;

You may hear his voice in the winter storm
Ring through the mist that keeps him warm,
When he catches the clouds, you may hear the strain,
As they break from his hoary head in rain.
And when the summer thunders jar
There comes loud chorus from afar:
"All are cobblers—high or low,
"Quoth the Cobbler of Glencroe."

ARROQUHAR, ARGYLESHIRE,
August, 1856.

TELL ME NO MORE.

Tell me no more amid these silent mountains,
Beneath these green leaves, musical with song,
Lull'd by the whisper of these upland fountains,
The old unvarying tale of guilt and wrong.

Leave me alone one day, with Nature's beauty,—
One day—one night—an alien to my care:
The needful rest will nerve my soul to duty,
And give me strength to struggle and to bear.

If it be true that Love is born to Sorrow,
That Hope deceives, and Friendship fades away,—
Let the sad wisdom slumber till to-morrow,
Nor stand between me and this summer-day.

If I am free to dive in Truth's deep ocean,
I will be free to linger on the shore,
To watch the billows in their wild commotion,
And hear far off their melancholy roar.

Pearls for the diver battling with the billows!
Pearls for his mournful pomp, and lonely pride!—
For me, this day, a harp upon the willows,
And flowers fresh-gather'd by the water's side.

ENGLISH VIRTUES.

I.

The virtues of old England!
We'll count them if we can,
And prove to all who doubt us
What makes the Englishman;
What makes us stand the foremost
Among the brave and free!
What did our sires in days of old,
And what in ours will we.

II.

From Agincourt and Cressy,
To Nile and Inkermann,
We've shown the wondering nations
What English valour can.

Our foes have felt our courage
In every clime and sea;
Our fathers stood like solid oak,
And so, to death, will we.

III.

In times when evil fortune
Assail'd our country's cause,
Around the throne we rallied,
Defenders of our laws;
Around the throne and altar,
And home, the sheltering tree;
Thus did of old our loyal sires,
And so, true hearts, will we.

IV.

Our ships in ev'ry ocean
Are messengers of peace;
They carry happy tidings,
And bid the world increase.

Our traders thrive by honour,
Their words and bonds agree!
Our fathers wrought for honest gold,
And won it—so will we.

V.

And in all times and places,
We cherish woman's worth;
Through all our isles we own her,
The love—light of the earth;
To youth and age we offer
Respect and bended knee,
Thus did our sires, and taught their sons,
And so, true hearts, will we.

VI.

And if we're rich and thriving,
We'll keep an open door;
If poor ourselves, the poorer
Shall taste our little store.

The hospitable wine-cup
Shall circle in our glee;—
Our fathers spread the welcome board,
And so, true hearts, will we.

VII.

The virtues of Old England!
We'll prove them if we can!
And show to all who doubt us
What makes the Englishman;
What makes us stand the foremost
Among the brave and free!
Thus did our sires in days of old,
And so, true hearts, will we.

GIDEON GRAY.

I.

Gideon Gray—poor Gideon Gray!
He lies in the meadow grass,
And all day long looks up at the clouds,
And watches them as they pass,—
He smiles to them, sings to them, shouting aloud
If the little clouds lag behind;
And waves his arms as the oak-tree waves
Its boughs to the summer wind.
And what doth he think? what doth he see
In the darkness and the shade?
His soul is in the outer-dark,—
None knows but the God who made.

II.

Gideon Gray—poor Gideon Gray!
He sits by the wintry fire,
And watches the live coals in the grate
With eyes that never tire.
He sings a song to the chirruping flames,
And balances to and fro
All day long, like the tick o' the clock,
While the pine-log embers glow.
There is no meaning in his mirth,—
His tenantless eyes express
Nothing but ignorance of pain,
And a stone-like happiness.

III.

Gideon Gray—poor Gideon Gray!
No misery touches him;
He hath no care; the shadow of grief
Were light to a soul so dim.

Oh! give us grief, 'tis better than this;
Sorrow on Sorrow's head
Ten times piled, were a lighter load
Than a happiness so dread.
Come, Sorrow, come! we'll bare our breasts
To meet thy heaviest blow,
Resigned—if Reason keep her seat
To guide us as we go.

THE MOUNTAIN TORRENT.

Fair Streamlet, running
Where violets grow,
Under the elm-trees,
Murmuring low;
Rippling gently
Amid the grass;
I have a fancy,
As I pass:

I have a fancy as I see
The trailing willows kissing thee;
As I behold the daisies pied,
The harebells nodding at thy side;
The sheep that feed upon thy brink,
The birds that stoop to thy wave to drink;
Thy blooms that tempt the bees to stray,
And all the life that tracks thy way.

I deem thou flowest
Through grassy meads,
To show the beauty
Of gentle deeds;
To show how happy
The world might be,
If men, observant,
Copied thee:

To show how small a stream may pour
Verdure and beauty on either shore;
To teach what humble men might do,
If their lives were pure, and their hearts were true;
And what a wealth they might dispense,
In modest, calm beneficence;
Marking their course, as thou dost thine,
By way-side flowers of love divine.

And, Streamlet, rushing,
With foam and spray,

Over the boulders
In thy way;
Leaping and rolling
From rock to cave,
A vast impetuous
Onward wave:
I have a fancy as I mark
Thy fall o'er the precipices dark;
As I behold thy power reveal'd,
And hear thy voice, like thunder peal'd;
I have a fancy as I sit
Under the rocks where thy rainbows flit,
And listen to thy roar and swell,
Sonorous, irresistible.

I deem thou leapest
Adown the rocks,
To show how little
Are Fortune's shocks

To him reliant,
Who knows his strength,
And measures evil—
Breadth and length:
I deem thou flowest to teach us still,
That perseverance conquers ill;
That no obstruction small or great,
Can daunt the soul that dares its fate;
That calm, true hearts in peril's hour
Confront it with superior power.
Here at thy side I sit and dream
These fancies twain, sweet Mountain Stream.

CASTLE ATHELSTONE.

I.

Through porch and hall the ivies creep,
In Beauty's bower the wild winds weep,
The raven haunts the turret lone;
Alas for fallen Athelstone!

II.

No more the earls and knights of old,
In pomp and pride of steel and gold,
With nodding plumes and trumpet-tone,
Come down to mighty Athelstone!

III.

No more their sons, the rich and great,
Receive the needy at their gate;
And call the fruitful shire their own:
Their names are lost in Athelstone!

IV.

No more their daughters, fair and proud,
Demand the homage of the crowd;
Their smiles made light where'er they shone:
Their place is dark in Athelstone!

V.

Their last descendant toils for bread,
And mourns the glory that has fled;
In distant lands he dwells unknown,
And sighs for ruin'd Athelstone!

THE HAWTHORN AND THE IVY.

I.

The Hawthorn bloom'd to the vernal air,
Merry and free in the woodland fair,
Attired in garments nuptial white,
She was a glory to the sight;
Her breath was sweeter than the morn:
A beautiful tree was the wild Hawthorn.

II.

The Ivy rooted by her side,
Woo'd and won her for his bride;
She was fain to be embraced,—
He twined his arms about her waist:
"Oh joy!" said he, "that I was born,
To love this beautiful wild Hawthorn!"

III.

Alas! for this world of grief and pain!
Wed, not mated, were the twain:
She was tender, mild, and true;
He was selfish, through and through,
And waved his leaves to the winds in scorn
Of his blossoming, beautiful, wild Hawthorn.

IV.

She could not drink the dew or shower,
Or feel the warmth of Summer's hour;
The Ivy stood between her heart
And all the life the skies impart:
She pined, she sigh'd, she lived forlorn,
And died in her sorrow—the wild Hawthorn.

THE VOLUNTARY.

The low, soft notes
Trickled upon each other like the drip
Of rain in summer upon trees and flowers,
And lo! I wander'd knee-deep in the grass,
Through the green meadows prankt with buttercups,
Valerian, daisies, and wild hyacinths.
I heard the rippling murmur of a brook,
Whose limpid waters sparkled to the sun;
Upon its brink a troop of children sat,
Fair boys with chubby cheeks and laughing eyes,
And girls with ringlets waving to the wind;
They braided garlands of the meadow flowers,
And tied them up with rushes. I could hear

Their joyous laughter and their artless talk,—
The song of blackbirds in the neighbouring copse,
The trumpet of the gnat,—the bee's loud horn,—
And click of grasshoppers, like meeting spears.

Anon the organ pour'd a deeper strain,
And carried me away—far, far away—
From the green meadows, miles and miles adown
A lengthening river, widening evermore.
I saw the towns and cities on its banks,—
I heard the pealing of the holiday bells,
And roar of people in the market-place,
The flapping of the sails of merchant ships
Laden with corn, that with each flowing tide
Came upward to the towns; I heard the creak
Of chains and dropping anchors in the ports,
And chorus, at the capstan, of the crews,
As round and round they trod with measured steps,
And all the bustle of their busy life.

And still away—away—in floods of sound,
Th' unseen musician, sitting at his keys,
Transported me, a willing auditor,
Where'er his fancy would. The deep, full tones
Grew deeper, fuller, louder, more sublime,
Until the waves of music swoll to seas,
Whose angry billows, white with crests of foam,
Rush'd in impetuous thunder on the land.
The Moon withdrew her splendour from the clouds,
And hid herself in darkness; the wind rose,
And roar'd in chorus with th' exulting Sea,
Who answer'd it with thunders of her own.
Rain, hail, and sleet, and avalanche of spray
Broke in succession; wind, and sea, and sky,—
Octave on octave—burst in worlds of sound,
The mighty discords clashing evermore,
Only to melt and fuse in harmonies.

Anon the lightning flash'd upon the dark,
And thunders rattled o'er the cloudy vault,

As if the chariots of the heavenly host
Drove to the judgment-seat, and Earth's last day
Were sounded by the trumpets of the spheres.
The echoes roll'd through the cathedral aisles,
And died in silence. Lo! the round, full moon
Peer'd from the bosom of a rifted cloud;
The wind sank low—the raging seas grew calm—
While loud, clear voices, from the upper air,
Sang in sweet harmonies, "The Lord is great,
His loving-kindness lasts for evermore."

MEOPS.

I.

Meops lived; a mighty man;
Had two castles by the sea,
Parks in half a dozen shires,
Hill and hollow, croft and lea,
Horses, hounds, and fallow deer,
Fifty thousand pounds a year,
Lands in mortgage and in fee;
Splendid Meops!—Envy's mark!—
Taper shining through the dark!—
Mighty man was he!

II.

Meops died—the great and high,—
Left his castles by the sea;
Left his horses, hounds, and hawks,
Lands in mortgage and in fee;

Left his flatterers, jesters, fools,
Toadies, parasites, and tools;
Left his wife and children three:
But when mighty Meops died,
Not one living creature sigh'd;
Little man was he!

BEAUTY AND LOVE.

Beauty and Love, and are they not the same?
The one is both—and both are but the one—
Pervasive they of all around the sun;
Of one same essence, differing but in name.
Lo! when pure Love lights his immortal flame,
He, and all Earth and Heaven in Beauty shine;—
And when true Beauty shows her face divine,
Love permeates the universal frame.
Holy of holies—mystery sublime!
Who truly loves is beautiful to see,
And scatters Beauty wheresoe'er he goes.
They fill all space—they move the wheels of Time;
And evermore from their dread Unity,
Through all the firmaments, Life's ocean flows.

LOVE; NEW AND OLD.

I.

And were they not the happy days,
When Love and I were young,
When Earth was robed in Heavenly light,
And all creation sung?
When gazing in my true love's face,
Through greenwood alleys lone,
I guess'd the secrets of her heart,
By whispers of mine own?

II.

And are they not the happy days,
When Love and I are old,
And silver Evening has replaced,
A Morn and Noon of gold?

Love stood alone mid youthful joy,
But now by Sorrow tried,
It sits, and calmly looks to Heaven,
With angels at its side.

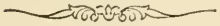
FAIREST AND DEAREST.

I.

Who shall be fairest?
Who shall be rarest?
Who shall be first in the songs that we sing?
She who is kindest,
When Fortune is blindest,
Bearing through winter the blooms of the spring;
Charm of our gladness,
Friend of our sadness
Angel of Life, when its pleasures take wing!
She shall be fairest,
She shall be rarest,
She shall be first in the songs that we sing!

II.

Who shall be nearest,
Noblest, and dearest,
Named but with honour and pride evermore?
He, the undaunted,
Whose banner is planted
On Glory's high ramparts and battlements hoar;
Fearless of danger,
To falsehood a stranger,
Looking not back while there's Duty before!
He shall be nearest,
He shall be dearest,
He shall be first in our hearts evermore!



THE MOUNTAIN-TOP.

Poor is the man, however great his wealth,
To whom the sunshine yields no mental health;
To whom the music of the early birds
Can bring no solace sweet as spoken words;
To whom the torrent, with its ceaseless hymn,
The streamlet wending through the copses dim,
The upland lake, reflecting moon and star,
Or mighty ocean gleaming from afar;
The roar of branches in the wintry woods,
The solemn diapason of the floods,
All sights and sounds in Nature's varied range
Lovely in all and good in every change,

Can bring no charm serene, no joy refined,
To please his heart or elevate his mind.

But rich is he, however scant of gold,
Who, in despite of sorrows manifold,
Can find a joy at morn or eventide,
And fresh instruction on the mountain-side;
Who loves the wisdom which the woodland yields,
And all the dewy beauty of the fields.
Welcome to him, with a companion fit,
Th' umbrageous depths where noonday chequers flit,
The shady path, the voice of brawling streams,
The silent pool where sunlight never beams,
The snowy summits of the Alpine peak,
The hopeful splendour on the morning's cheek,
The glow of noon, the evening's tender light,
And all the placid majesty of night,
The peace and joy, the hope and love that dwell
In Nature's eyes, for those who love her well.

Up to the mountain!—ere the morn be late,
And farewell Wisdom, in her robes of state;
We'll bid her welcome, with her travelling suit,
Her ashen staff, her knapsack, and her flute!
Up to the mountain!—to the very cope!—
Over the moorlands—up the breezy slope;—
Or down in dells, beside the rippling brooks
In their green furrows—through the loveliest nooks—
To their top fountains, whence, meandering slow,
They bound in beauty to the vales below!
Up to the mountain, in the air and sun,
For health and pleasure to be woo'd and won!

How cheerily the voices of the morn
Rise as we go! The lark has left the corn,
And sings her glad hosannas to the day;
The blackbird trolls his rich notes far away;
While, from th' awaken'd homestead far adown,
Come floating up the murmurs of the town.

Hark to the day's shrill trumpeter, the cock—
The bark of hounds—the bleating of the flock—
The lowing of the milk-o'erburden'd kine—
And laugh of children; sweetest music mine.

Upwards, still up!—and all these sounds expire
In the faint distance, save that, mounting higher,
We still can hear, descending from the cloud,
The lark's triumphal anthem, long and loud.
Or far away, a wanderer from the bowers,
Rifling for sweets the now infrequent flowers,
A solitary bee goes buzzing by,
With livery coat, and bundle at his thigh;
With honest music, telling all that will,
How great a worker rambles on the hill.

A streamlet gushes on the mountain-side,
It yields a draught to men of sloth denied;
Unknown to all who love the easy street
Better than crags where cloud and mountain meet,—

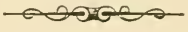
Unprized, untasted in the plodding town,
Where limbs grow rusty upon beds of down.
Let no man say he has outlived delight,
Who has not climb'd the mountain's topmost height,
And found far up, when faint with toil and heat,
A little fountain oozing at his feet,
And laid him down upon the grass or stones,
At his full length, to rest his weary bones,
And drink long draughts at the delicious spring,
Better than wine at banquet of a king:
And when refresh'd, and grateful for the gift,
To fill his pocket-flask with prudent thrift,
Then bathe his hands and face, and start again
With keener pleasure, purchased by a pain.

Upwards, still upwards, lies the arduous way;
But not still upward must our vision stray;—
In climbing hills, as in our life, we find
True Wisdom stops at times, and looks behind—

Stops to survey the progress she has made,
The sunny levels and the flowery shade,
Or difficulties pass'd. Thus, as we go,
We pause to view the loveliness below,—
Or note the landscape widening as we climb,
New at each turn, and variously sublime.

How bountiful and kind is Heaven to man!
What ceaseless love pervades the wondrous plan!
Each sense, each faculty, and each desire,
To those who humbly hope while they aspire,
Is a perpetual source of secret joy,
If Reason prompt and hallow its employ;
And all God's noblest gifts are most profuse,
And simplest joys grow exquisite by use.
I never see the landscape smiling fair,
Without delight that seems too great to bear;
I never turn from man's to nature's face,
Without a pleasure that I cannot trace;

I never hear the tempest in the trees,
Without mysterious throbs of sympathies;
I never hear the billows on the shore,
Without a secret impulse to adore;
Nor stand, as now upon the quiet hills,
Without a mild religious awe, that fills
My soul with raptures I cannot express,—
Raptures, not peace—a joy, not happiness.



MIST.

One day I walk'd through mist and haze of cloud;
I could not see the sunshine in the sky;
I heard a mountain torrent pealing loud,
But could not see it, though I knew 'twas nigh;
I wander'd on the sullen ocean-shore,
But could not see the wrinkles on its face,
And only knew 'twas ocean by its roar,
So dense the vapour lay on all the place.
Heavily on hill and plain
Hung moisture, neither dew nor rain;
The birds were silent in the darkling bowers,
And not a shadow fell to mark the hours;
Ghost-like paced about the men,
Through ghostly alleys, speaking low;
And every object on my ken
Was vague, and colourless, and slow.

I ask'd a native what the land might be.
"The land," he said, "of heavenly Poesy."
"And who are these that wander up and down?"
"Poets," he said, "of great and high renown."
"And art thou of them?" "No—not so," he sigh'd;
"I'm but a critic." "Tell me," I replied,
"What kind of poesy these poets make.
If they be makers, as true poets are,
And whether from the clouds their hue they take,
And sing without the light of sun or star."
"We want no sunshine here," the critic said,
"Nor wholesome light, nor shape too well defined;
There needs no radiance for the drowsy head,
Nor vulgar common sense for sleepy mind.
Our nerves are very finely strung,
And much emotion would destroy them quite;
And if a meaning start to page or tongue
Of our great poets, when they speak or write,
They swathe and swaddle it in pompous rhyme,
And darken counsel with vain words;

And girls, green-sickly, children of the clime,
Proclaim it lovely as the chant of birds,
And write it in their albums, or rehearse,
With lisping chatter, the delightful verse.
Sickly—sickly are our bards;—
The rose-tree gall is surely fair,
Ay, fairer to our faint and dim regards
Than healthy roses flaunting in the air.
Most lovely is our daily languishment,
Our sweet half-consciousness, our listless ease,
Our inchoate discourse magniloquent,
Through which we see the surging mysteries
Of Time and Life, Eternity and Death;
Or think we see them; is it not the same?
Death is a mist, and Life is but a breath,
And Love a cloudy, ever-flickering flame."
"Then," I rejoin'd, "the poets of this land,
Misty and mystic, hard to understand,
Do not desire, like Shakspeare of old days,
To reach the popular heart through open ways;

To speak for all men ; to be wise and true,
Bright as the noon-time, clear as morning dew,
And wholesome in the spirit and the form ?"
" Shakspeare !" he answer'd, "may his name endure !
But what is he to us ? Our veins are warm
With other blood than his, perchance as pure.
Each for his time !—our time is one of mist,
And we are misty,—love us those who list."
He said, and disappear'd ; and I took ship,
And left that cloudy land ; and sailing forth,
I felt the free breeze sporting at my lip,
And saw the Pole-star in the clear blue North,
And all the pomp of Heaven. Right glad was I,
Bareheaded to the glory of the sky.

CRACKLETHORN.

"For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity."—*Ecclesiastes.*

THROUGH a great and a mighty city
I roam'd like one forlorn;
Through the city, amid the people,
In the land of Cracklethorn.
I heard the sorry jesters,—
The dismal songs they sang,
The crack of their witless laughter,
Their loud, incessant slang.
At the holiest and the highest
They launch'd the wordy dart;
They sneer'd at manly honour,
They scoff'd at woman's heart.

They gibed and mock'd at Virtue,
They ridiculed the truth,
Till their old men grinn'd like monkeys,
And a blight came o'er their youth.
To be great, or wise, or lofty,
Was to earn their giggling scorn.
"Come plague, and famine, or fire from Heaven,"
I said, like one forlorn,—
"Come plague, and famine, and fire from Heaven,
And fall on Cracklethorn!"

THE EGLANTINE.

I.

Modest Brier! odour shedding,
Down the lanes to cottage-doors;
Morn herself, if failing sweetness,
Might replenish from thy stores.
Charm of wild woods! humbly virtuous;
Heedless thou to flaunt or shine;—
Rich men praise thee, poor men bless thee
Shy but lovely Eglantine!

II.

Clad in garments white as lilies,
Newly wash'd by April's tears,
Scattering smiles like sunshine round her,
Lo! my love, my queen, appears.

Fragrant Brier! like the maiden
Fair, but prizing virtue best;
Freshly gather'd, love inviting,
Go and bloom upon her breast!

THE MEN OF THE NORTH.

I.

Fierce as its sunlight, the East may be proud
Of its gay gaudy hues and its sky without cloud;
Mild as its breezes, the beautiful West
May smile like the valleys that dimple its breast;
The South may rejoice in the vine and the palm,
In its groves, where the midnight is sleepy with balm:
Fair though they be,
There's an isle in the sea,
The home of the brave and the boast of the free!
Hear it, ye lands! let the shout echo forth,—
The lords of the world are the Men of the North!

II.

Cold though our seasons, and dull though our skies,
There's a might in our arms and a fire in our eyes;
Dauntless and patient, to dare and to do,—
Our watchword is "Duty," our maxim is "Through!"
Winter and storm only nerve us the more,
And chill not the heart, if they creep through the door:

Strong shall we be
In our isle of the sea,

The home of the brave and the boast of the free!
Firm as the rock when the storm flashes forth,
We'll stand in our courage—the Men of the North!

III.

Sunbeams that ripen the olive and vine,
In the face of the slave and the coward may shine;
Roses may blossom where Freedom decays,
And crime be a growth of the Sun's brightest rays.

Scant though the harvest we reap from the soil,
Yet Virtue and Health are the children of Toil:
Proud let us be
Of our isle of the sea,
The home of the brave and the boast of the free:
Men with true hearts—let our fame echo forth—
Oh, these are the fruit that we grow in the North!

THE TREES.

I.

If you could dance when Orpheus piped,
Ye oaks, and elms, and beeches,
Try, when a man of modern time
Your courtesy beseeches.
'Twas but his fancy! Well, 'tis mine,—
So do your best endeavour:
The facts of History pass away,
The thoughts may live for ever.

II.

My friend the merchant of Cornhill,
Awake to nought but scheming,
And he who plods in Fig-tree Court,
Will call this idle dreaming.

But ye shall dance, ye joyous trees,
Though they may scoff or pity;
And measure, in their self-conceit,
Arcadia by the City.

III.

Come, Father Oak, so old and staid,
But vigorous and hearty,
Shake off the soberness of years,
And join the merry party.
'Tis not becoming? Harmless mirth
Takes no account of ages,—
So, Monarch of the Woods, unbend,
And frolic with your pages!

IV.

And thou, superbest matron Beech,
In all thy bloom of beauty,
Relax; and learn that, now and then,
Enjoyment is a duty.

And Lady Lime, the honey sweet,
With music in thy tresses,
Step out,—the wild winds pipe the tune,
And every moment presses.

V.

Ye damsel Birches, slim and fair,
And capersome as misses
Who've just come home from boarding-school,
And dream of love and kisses,
I know you're ready: come away,
With silver-braided kyrtles,
And taper limbs, and flowing hair,
And breath as sweet as myrtles.

VI.

Ye Firs and Larches, rough as lads
Let loose from School or College;
Ye Poplars, stiff as men on 'Change,
Forget your cram of knowledge.

You're no such beauties of yourselves,
But every tree an aid is,—
And you'll improve in elegance,
By contact with the ladies.

VII.

Ye steadfast Elms, our English trees,
The charm of rural alleys,
The grace of parks and village-greens,
And darlings of our valleys:
Come forth, with robes of flowing green,
The ivy for your flounces,—
The dance will languish in the dale,
If one of you renounces.

VIII.

And you, like melancholy maids
Who sigh on lonely pillows,
Or widows, ere they've cast their weeds,—
Ye fond, romantic Willows,

Come from your looking-glass, the stream,
And cease to play at Sorrow,
And taste a little Joy to-day,
To think about to-morrow.

IX.

And thou, dear Hawthorn,—sweetest sweet,
The beautiful, the tender,
Bright with the fondling of the sun,
And prankt in bridal splendour,—
Come with thy sisters, full of bloom,
And all thy bridemaids merry,—
Acacia, Chestnut, Lilac fair,
The Apple, and the Cherry.

X.

Strike up the music! Lo! it sounds!
The expectant woodlands listen;
They wave their branches to the sky,
And all their dew-drops glisten.

There comes a rustling from the heights,
A buzzing from the hollow,
They move, the ancient Oaks and Elms,
And all the juniors follow.

XI.

They move, they start, they thrill, they dance,
They shake their boughs with pleasure,
And flutter all their gay green leaves,
Obedient to the measure.
They choose their partners: Oak and Beech
Pair off, a stately couple;
And Larch to Willow makes his bow,
Th' unbending to the supple.

XII.

The Hawthorn, charm of every eye,
In Beauty's ranks a leader,
Has choice of many for her hand,
But gives it to the Cedar.

She loves the wisdom of his looks,
And name renown'd in story;
And he, th' effulgence of her eyes,
And fragrance of her glory.

XIII.

The Poplar, very gaunt and tall,
Says to the Ash: "May I press
Thy fairy figure in the waltz?
If not, I'll ask the Cypress."
And Ash consents,—but thinks her beau
Has nothing that entices;
He looks so like a serving-man,
To hand about the ices.

XIV.

The Elms and Lindens choose their mates,
And e'en the sturdy Holly;
And all the Brambles and the Ferns
Think standing still is folly,

And foot it briskly on the sward,
As wild as lads and lasses,—
But make sad havoc, as they twirl,
With all the flowers and grasses.

XV.

Come here, thou man of Lloyd's and 'Change,
Come here, thou grave decider,
Who splittest straws in Fig-tree Court,—
Come here, thou money'd spider,
Who lendest cash at cent. per cent.,
And see our woodland pastime!—
If once you see it, I'll be sworn
It will not be the last time.

XVI.

You cannot see it? Never will,
'Twas waste of breath to ask you:
To look an inch before your nose,
Would sorely be to task you.

Come thou, sweet Lady of my heart!
My other self, and dearest:
If there be music in the woods,
Come, tell me if thou hearest.

XVII.

If there be spirits in the trees,
Thine eyes, with inward lustre
Caught from the fountains of thy soul,
Will see them as they cluster.
Thou hearest—seest! Oh! my love,
Thy sympathy enhances
All joys I feel, and turns to truths
My shadows of romances.

XVIII.

Take root again, ye docile Trees,
No longer leap and jostle;
There's other music in the boughs,—
The Cuckoo and the Throstle.

The breeze has dropped, the air is still,
The long grass sleeps in quiet;
And dancing, in an hour so calm,
Seems weariness and riot.

XIX.

Besides, the fitful mood has changed,
Gone back to times Elysian,
When those who sat beneath the trees
Could see a brighter vision.
We'll see it too. Come, potent witch,
And do as thou art bidden!
Come, Fancy! touch those wrinkled barks,
And show what they have hidden!

XX.

The west wind roaming through the woods,
With briery odours laden,
Breathes gently, as from every tree
Out steps a spirit maiden,—

Th' immortal Dryads,—old as Greece
But youthful as this minute,
And lovely as the loveliest thing
That moves and sparkles in it!

XXI.

Barefooted, in their robes of green,
Blue-eyed, with tresses golden,
By none but those whom Fancy loves,
In all their pomp beholden;
We see them on the sunny slope,
And, credulous as childhood,
Love, for their sakes, each teeming tree
That blossoms in the wild wood.

XXII.

Oh! richer far, than he who owns
This forest, root and branches,
And calculates how much 'twill yield
For houses and ship-launches,—

Whose trees are timber, nothing more,—
We own, if we enjoy it;
And this great property of ours,
We dare him to destroy it.

XXIII.

Ours is the forest—ours the land—
And ours the great sky-ocean,
Through which their ships can never sail,
Whose pelf is their devotion.
Leave us our dreams, ye men of facts,
Who shake your heads profoundly,
And tell us if ye're half as glad,
Or if ye sleep as soundly!

THE SONG OF THALIESSIN.

I HAVE a people of my own,
And great or small, whate'er they be,
'Tis Harp and Harper, touch and tone—
There's music between them and me.

And let none say, when low in death
The soul-inspiring minstrel lies,
That I misused my hand or breath,
For favour in my people's eyes.

Whate'er my faults as mortal man,
Let foes revive them if they must!
And yet a grave is ample span
To hide their memory with my dust.

But give, oh! give me what I claim,
The Harper's meed, the Minstrel's crown;
I never sang for sake of Fame,
Or clutch'd at baubles of renown.

I spoke my thought, I sang my song,
Because I pitied, felt, and knew:
I never glorified a wrong,
Or sang approval of th' untrue.

And if I touch'd the people's heart,
Is that a crime in true men's eyes,
Or desecration of an art
That speaks to human sympathies?

As man, let men my worth deny;
As Harper, by my harp I stand,
And dare the Future to deny
The might that quiver'd from my hand.

A King of Bards, though scorn'd and poor,
I feel the crown upon my head,
And Time shall but the more secure,
My right to wear it.—I have said.

ANGLING.

Flow, river, flow!
Where the alders grow,—
Where the mosses rest
On the bank's high breast:
Flow on, and make sweet music ever,
Thou joyous and beloved river.

Such peace upon the landscape broods,
There is such beauty in the woods;
Such notes of joy come from the copse,
And from the swinging oak-tree tops;

There are such sounds of life, and health, and pleasure
  Abroad upon the breeze,
And on the river rippling at sweet leisure,
  Beneath its banks of fringing trees,—
That to my mind a thought of death or pain
Seems a discordant note in heavenly strain.

Death is the rule of life: the hawk in air
Pursues the swallow for his daily fare;
The blackbird and the linnet rove
On a death-errand through the grove;
The happy slug and glow-worm pale,
Must die to feed the nightingale;
The mighty lion hunts his destined prey;
And the small insect, fluttering on our way,
Devours the tinier tribes that live unseen
In shady nooks and populous forests green;
The hungry fish, in seas and rivers,
Are death-receivers and death-givers;

And animalculæ conceal'd from sight,
In littleness sublime and infinite,
That whirl in drops of water from the fen,—
Creatures as quarrelsome as men,—
Or float in air upon invisible wings,
Devour the countless hosts of smaller things.
But simple is the law which they obey—
They never torture when they slay,
Unconquerable need, the law of life,
Impels the fiercest to the fatal strife:
They feel no joy in stopping meaner breath,
'Tis man alone that makes a sport of death.

So, gentle river, flow,
Where the green alders grow,
Where the pine-tree rears its crest,
And the stock-dove builds her nest,
Where the wild-flow'r odours float,
And the lark with gushing throat

Pours out her rapturous strains
To all the hills and plains;
And if, amid the stream,
The lurking angler dream
Of hooking fishes with his treacherous flies,
Reflect, oh river, the unclouded skies,
And bear no windy ripple on thy breast,—
The cloud and ripple he loves best,—
So that the innocent fish may see,
And shun their biped enemy.

Flow, river, flow,
Where the violets grow,
Where the bank is steep,
And the mosses sleep,
And the green trees nod to thy waves below:
Flow on and make sweet music ever,
Thou joyous and beloved river!

CARELESS.

Spring gave me a friend, and a true, true love;—
The summer went caroling by,
And the autumn brown'd, and the winter frown'd,
And I sat me down to sigh:
My friend was false for the sake of gold,
Ere the farmer stack'd his rye;
And my true love changed with the fickle west wind,
Ere winter dull'd the sky:
But the bees are humming—a new spring's coming,
And none the worse am I.

JOAN OF ARC.

Th' old Norman city, with its towers and spires
And gorgeous architecture, was to me
The shrine of one great name; where'er I went
That memory followed me. From church to church,
From the cathedral where King Richard sleeps,
To St. Ouen and beautiful Maclou—
From bridge to market-place, and justice-hall,
A mighty spirit kept me company.
Through quaint old streets, whose every window seem'd
Old as the days when haughty Bedford held
His martial court in Rouen, wander'd I;
And still thy memory, hapless Joan of Arc,
Wander'd beside me. "Here," I said, "poor maid,
Thou wert led captive, after saving France!

Here thou wert gibed and scorn'd by brutal men.
Here, from their windows, peep'd the gaping crowd,
To see thee made a shameful spectacle.
Here Superstition, pandering to Revenge,
Accused thee of all vile and senseless crimes.
Here, at their harsh tribunal, thy good deeds
Were each interpreted in evil sense;
Thy love of country in their eyes became
Treason most foul; thy courage, lunacy;
Thy fortune, witchcraft; thy young purity,
An outward mask to hide the shame within.
And here, unhappy saviour of a realm,
Th' ungenerous foemen, smitten by the steel
Of warriors roused to battle by thy voice,
Sated unmanly vengeance on thy head,
And slew, by cruel fire and torturing pangs,
The helpless woman they could not subdue.
Rouen is sacred to thy memory;
The ancient city is thy monument;
There's not a spire or tower within its bound,

But pleads for justice to thy slander'd name.
Thou hast it, Spirit! Compensating Time
Has done thee justice, as it does to all,
However hated, injured, or malign'd.
The truly great and good have constant friends;
The rolling centuries, in their behalf,
Sue for reversal of th' unjust decree
That doom'd their names to infamy and scorn.
They never sue in vain; and thine, sad maid!
Shines like a gem upon the brow of France—
A pearl of beauty on her queenly crown!

ROUEN, 1847.

STORM APPROACHING.

I.

We live in a time of sorrow,
A time of doubt and storm,
When the thunder-clouds hang heavy,
And the air is thick and warm;
When the far-off lightnings gather
On the verge of the darkening sky,
And the birds of the air, fear-stricken,
To nest and cover fly:
Look up! ye drowsy people,
There's desolation nigh.

II.

Look up! ye drowsy people,
And shield yourselves in time,

From the wrath and retribution
That track the heels of crime;
That lie in wait for the folly
Of the lordly and the strong;
That spare nor high nor lowly
From vengeance threaten'd long,—
But strike at the heart of nations,
And kings who govern wrong.

III.

Kneel down in the dust and ashes!
Kneel down, ye high and great,
Who call yourselves the bulwarks
Or fathers of the State,
And clear your sleepy vision
From selfishness and scorn,
And mingle with the people,
To learn what they have borne,—
Their suffering and their sadness,
Toiling forlorn, forlorn!

IV.

Kneel down in the dust and sackcloth,
And own, with contrite tears,
Your arrogant self-worship,
And wrongs of many years;
Your luxuries hard-hearted;
Your pride so barren-cold,
Remote from the warmth of pity
For men of the self-same mould,
As good as yourselves, or better,
In all but the shiny gold.

V.

Kneel down, ye priests and preachers,
Ye men of lawn and stole,
Who call yourselves physicians
And guardians of the soul,—
And own if ye have not hated
Your brethren, night and day,

Because at God's high altars
They bent another way,
And sought not your assistance
To worship and to pray.

VI.

Kneel down in the dust, confessing
Ye've preach'd the truth of God,
When your feet were swift for malice,
And in evil pathways trod;
That ye've loved the flesh, and flesh-pots,
Above the creed you taught;
And, at wealth and pomp aspiring,
Have clutch'd them, passion-fraught:
Ye hypocrites unholy,
Who hold religion nought!

VII.

Kneel down—low down—ye traders,
Ye men of mines and mills,—

With your ships on every ocean,
And beeves on a thousand hills;
With factories and workshops,
And stalls in every mart;
Who serve the great god Mammon
With singleness of heart,
And give him soul and body,
Till soul and body part;

VIII.

Who talk of your faith and credit,
And honour clear of stain;—
And own if ye have not cheated
And lied for the sake of gain;
If ye have not done, in secret,
Worse things than the wretch who steals
Your 'kerchief from your pocket,—
But which no tongue reveals,
To shame you in the market
Where barefaced Commerce deals.

IX.

Kneel down, and own, soul-humbled,
Ye traders of the street,
If ye have not drugg'd the potion,
Or the bread that poor men eat;
If ye have not dealt false measure,
Or ground your workmen down,
Or crush'd their wives and daughters
Into the hideous town:
Then gone to Church or Chapel,
In your drab and brown.

X.

And you, ye toiling millions,
Meek herd and flock of men!
That swink, and sweat, and suffer,
For three-score years and ten,—
Kneel down, in self-abasement,
And ask yourselves, each one,

If ye grow no evil passions,
To shade you from the sun,—
Or sit in chains, lamenting,
When ye might rise and run.

XI.

Ask if ye do not grovel
To things yourselves have made,—
To the Lords of Many-Acres,
To the Money-Grubs of Trade;
Ask if ye do not wallow
Unseemly in the mire,
With brawls and feuds unmanly,
In the filth of low desire:
Gin-sodden'd and degraded,
Drinking avenging fire.

XII.

And ask yourselves, ye lowly
And reverential poor,

Who go to Church on Sundays,
With downcast looks demure,—
If never at God's altars,
With baseless prayers and sighs,
Ye have not gazed at riches
With fierce, exulting eyes,
And said, "This world's rejected
Shall grasp you in the skies."

XIII.

Ask if when lordly fortune
Went whirling past your door,
Ye felt not bitter envy
Burn at your heart's deep core,
Or whisper you to patience
With promises of Heaven,
Where the poor, in regal garments
As white as snow new-driven,
Should look from their thrones at Dives
In hell-fire unforgiven.

XIV.

Ask if sincere obedience
To God's Almighty will
Have taught you how to suffer
The burthen of your ill;
And if no sordid barter
Of this world for the next,
Or thought of the rich man groaning,
At the needle's eye perplex'd,
Inspired your resignation
When ye heard the holy text.

XV.

And you, ye lords and rulers,
And magnates of the realm,
Who scent impending danger
That looms to overwhelm,—
Have ye not, basely sleeping
In apathy and rust,

Been cowards to your duty,
Betray'd your solemn trust,
And given to-morrow's birthright
For the morning's crust?

XVI.

Sunk in the Sloughs of Faction,
Obtuse, and blind, and dumb,
Have ye not sold the safety
Of ages yet to come,
For triumphs over rivals
Who sought to cast you out,
For paltry ease and quiet,
Or the crowd's ignoble shout;—
Or laugh'd at degradation
Though it hemm'd you round about?

XVII.

Awake! awake! ye sleepers,
There's danger over all,

When the strong shall be sorely shaken,
And the weak shall go to the wall;
When towers on the hill-top standing
Shall topple at a word,
And the principles of ages
Shall be question'd with the sword,
And the heart's blood of the nations
Like fountains shall be pour'd.

XVIII.

When a fierce and a searching Spirit
Shall stalk o'er the startled earth,
And make great Thrones the playthings
Of his madness or his mirth;
When ancient creeds and systems,
In the fury of his breath,
Shall whirl like the leaves of Autumn,
When the north wind belloweth,—
And drift away unheeded,
To the deep, deep seas of death.

XIX.

The first large rain-drops patter,
The low wind moans and sings,—
Awake, ere the tempest gather,
Rulers, and priests, and kings!
Ere the thunder-clouds are open'd,
That wall and flank the sky;
Ere the whirlwind leaves its caverns,
And the shafts of vengeance fly,—
Look up! ye drowsy people,
There's desolation nigh!

September, 1856.

THE RAPID STREAM.

I.

Oh streamlet swiftly flowing,
Down through the corn-fields going,
Stay thy course with me;
For us the skylarks sing,
For us awakes the Spring;
There's time to spare, the earth is fair;
Why hurry to the sea?

II.

The sky is bright above thee,
Silvery branches love thee,
Bending to the reeds;
No mill with busy wheel,
Or ship with ploughing keel,
With sad unrest disturbs thy breast,
Amid thy flowery meads.

III.

Ambition's voice may woo thee,
Glory and gold may sue thee;
All are empty breath;
The end is still the same,
And Power and Wealth and Fame
But run at last, through deserts vast,
To swell the sea of Death.

IV.

Then why, without enjoying
Pleasures around us toying,
Pass our rapid day?
Our cares will come full soon,
Beneath the icy moon,
And we'll behold the ocean cold;—
Let's linger while we may.

THE SAILOR'S WIFE—Part. I.

I.

I've a letter from thy sire,
Baby mine, Baby mine!
I can read and never tire,
Baby mine!
He is sailing o'er the sea—
He is coming back to thee,
He is coming home to me,
Baby mine!

II.

He's been parted from us long
Baby mine, Baby mine!
But if hearts be true and strong,
Baby mine!

They shall brave Misfortune's blast,
And be overpaid at last
For all pain and sorrow pass'd,
Baby mine!

III.

Oh, I long to see his face,
Baby mine, Baby mine!
In his old accustom'd place,
Baby mine!
Like the rose of May in bloom,
Like a star amid the gloom,
Like the sunshine in the room,
Baby mine!

IV.

Thou wilt see him and rejoice,
Baby mine, Baby mine!
Thou wilt know him by his voice,
Baby mine!

By his love-looks that endear,
By his laughter ringing clear,
By his eyes that know not fear,
Baby mine!

V.

I'm so glad—I cannot sleep,
Baby mine, Baby mine!
I'm so happy—I could weep,
Baby mine!
He is sailing o'er the sea,
He is coming home to me,
He is coming back to thee,
Baby mine!

THE SAILOR'S WIFE.—Part. II.

I.

O'er the blue ocean gleaming
She sees a distant ship,
As small to view
As the white sea-mew,
Whose wings in the billows dip.
"Blow favouring gales, in her answering sails!
Blow steadily and free!
Rejoicing, strong,
Singing a song,
Her rigging and her spars among,
And waft the vessel in pride along,
That bears my love to me."

II.

Nearer—still nearer driving,
The white sails grow and swell;
Clear to her eyes
The pennant flies,
And the flag she knows so well.
"Blow favouring gales, in her answering sails!
Waft him, oh gentle sea!
And still, oh heart!
Thy fluttering start!
Why throb and beat as thou wouldst part,
When all so happy and bless'd thou art?
He comes again to thee!"

III.

The swift ship drops her anchor—
A boat puts off for shore—
Against its prow
The ripples flow,
To the music of the oar.

"And art thou here, mine own, my dear,
Safe from the perilous sea?—
Safe, safe at home,
No more to roam!
Blow, tempests blow—my love has come;
And sprinkle the clouds with your dashing foam!
He shall part no more from me!"

EACH BLOCK OF MARBLE IN THE MINE.

I.

Each block of marble in the mine
Conceals the Paphian queen,
Apollo robed in light divine,
And Pallas the serene:
It only needs the lofty thought
To give the glories birth;
And, lo! by skilful fingers wrought,
They captivate the earth.

II.

So in the hardest human heart
One little well appears,
A fountain in some hidden part,
That brims with gentle tears.

It only needs the master-touch
Of Love's or Pity's hand,
And, lo! the rock with water bursts
And gushes o'er the land.

THE SILENT HILLS.

Wandering 'mid the silent hills,
Sitting by the lonely rills,
And meditating as I go
On human happiness and woe,
Fancies strange unbidden rise
And flit before my placid eyes:
Dreaminesses, sometimes dim
As is the moon's o'erclouded rim;
And sometimes clear as visions are
When the sleeping soul sees deep and far,
Yet cannot, when it wakes, recall,
For the senses' and the reason's thrall.

I love, in idle moods like these,
To sit beneath the shade of trees
In idle and luxurious ease;

Or lie amid the fern and grass,
And talk with shepherds as they pass:
To learn their humble hopes and fears,
And the small changes of their years.

And if no shepherd saunters by,
I can talk with the clouds of the sky,
And watch them from my couch of fern,
As, Proteus-like, they change and turn,—
Now castles grey, with golden doors,
Gem roofs, and amethystine floors;
Now melting into billowy flakes,
Sky islands, or aërial lakes;
Or mimicking the form and show
Of the huge mountains far below.

And sometimes—vagrant, wild, and free—
I look upon the grass and tree,
With an all-pervading sympathy,

And bid them tell if life like theirs
Is void of feeling, joys, and cares.
And ever an answer seems to breathe
From the branches above, and the sward beneath,
And the tree says, "Many a joy is mine,—
In the winter cloud, and the summer shine;
With the daily heat, and the nightly dew,
My strength and pleasure I renew.
I sleep at eve when the skies grow dark,
And wake at the singing of the lark.
And when the winter is crisp and cold,
My life retreats beneath the mould,
And waits in the warmth for the spring-time rain,
To summon the sap to my boughs again.
I feel like you the balmy air,
And am grateful for a life so fair."
And the grass, and the fern, and the waving reeds,
And the wild flowers, and the nameless weeds,
Reply in a low, soft tone of song
That creeps like an infant breeze along:

"We live;—and every life that's given
Receives a joy from bounteous Heaven,
In the reproduction of its kind,
In the warmth, and the light, and the dew, and
the wind."

Deem me not idle if I stray,
Oh! sons of care, for awhile away
From the crowded marts of busy men,
To the wild woods and the lonely glen,
And give my thoughts a holiday.
You cannot tell the work I do,
When I lie dreaming beneath the blue;
Or how these fancies dim and strange,
May amalgamate and change,
Or grow like seeds in aftertime,
To something better than my rhyme.

A WELCOME TO PEACE.

(Music by F. Mori.)

I.

Join, nations, join your hands,
Through all your happy lands,—
And let the church-bells ring,
And youths and maidens sing:
The seraph Peace from Heaven descends
To bid mankind be friends,—
Lo! she comes!
Beat the drums,
And let the banners wave o'er land and sea!
And harmless cannon roar
From furthest shore to shore,—
That Strife and all its brood have ceased to be!
Join your hands,
All ye lands,
And welcome Peace! the beautiful! the free!

II.

No longer may the car
Of blind, infuriate War,
Drive o'er the bleeding Earth,
To quench its children's mirth,
And scatter Vengeance and Dismay,—
But Peace, like flowery May,
Spread around,
O'er the ground,
The seeds of Joy, to blossom like a tree:
The fruits of Plenty's horn,—
The oil, the wine, the corn;
And nobler blessings destined yet to be;—
Join your hands,
All ye lands,
And welcome Peace! the beautiful! the free!

PENDRAGON THE KING.

I.

Of all the bold Britons Pendragon was lord,
His joy was in battles, his trust was the sword;
With his spears on the land, and his ships on the main,
He drove out the Saxon, he routed the Dane,
Great Pendragon the King!
Said the Britons, "We'll ne'er see a monarch again,
Like Pendragon the King!"

II.

The plague, but the pride of his people was he;
They fawn'd at his footstool, and thought they were free;

If any gainsay'd him, he hung them on high;
He tax'd them, and robb'd them,—but who could deny
Great Pendragon the King?
His word was the law,—there were none to reply
To Pendragon the King!

III.

He died,—yet the sun shone as bright as before,
And kiss'd the rose-tree at the cottager's door:
Neither smith at the anvil, nor child at its play,
Nor churl at the plough, was sad-hearted that day,
For Pendragon the King!
He is gone; let him rest,—why should pleasure delay
For Pendragon the King?

IV.

So runs the big world with the biggest of men:
We are mighty, no doubt, with the sword or the pen,

But we fall like the leaves when the autumn is cold,
And sleep in our place in the sheltering mould,
Like Pendragon the King!
And the day follows night just the same as of old,
And the summer, the spring.

THE RETURN HOME.

I.

The favouring wind pipes aloft in the shrouds,
And our keel flies as fast as the shadow of clouds;
The land is in sight, on the verge of the sky,
And the ripple of waters flows pleasantly by,—
And faintly stealing,
Booming, pealing,
Chime from the city the echoing bells;
And louder, clearer,
Softer, nearer,
Ringing sweet welcome the melody swells;
And it's home! and it's home! all our sorrows are pass'd,—
We are home in the land of our fathers at last.

II.

How oft with a pleasure akin to a pain,
In fancy we roam'd through thy pathways again,
Through the mead, through the lane, through the grove, through the corn,
And heard the lark singing its hymn to the morn;
And 'mid the wild wood,
Dear to childhood,
Gather'd the berries that grew by the way;
But all our gladness
Died in sadness,
Fading like dreams in the dawning of day;—
But we're home! we are home! all our sorrows are pass'd,—
We are home in the land of our fathers at last.

III.

We loved thee before, but we'll cherish thee now
With a deeper emotion than words can avow;

Wherever in absence our feet might delay,
We had never a joy like the joy of to-day;
And home returning,
Fondly yearning,
Faces of welcome seem crowding the shore,—
England! England!
Beautiful England!
Peace be around thee, and joy evermore!
And it's home! and it's home! all our sorrows are pass'd,—
We are home in the land of our fathers at last.

TIME AND THE SPRING.

I.

"Oh! spare my tender flowers:
My lilies born of light,
My snowy apple-blooms,
My roses, red and white,—
Oh! spare them every one!"
Said Spring the young and fair,
To Time, whose hand had strewn,
Her blossoms in the air:
"Why should they perish
That fill the world with joy?
Be kind, oh Time, and spare them,—
'Tis cruel to destroy!"

II.

"Oh! foolish maid!" said Time,
"Renounce the idle suit;—
To grant it would deprive
The Autumn of its fruit.
Be thankful for the gifts
That bounteous Heaven bestows;
Enjoy them while they last,
Nor mourn the fading rose.
The world would weary
Did night not follow day;
And Spring herself would perish
If every month were May."

MANNA.

I.

To nourish wandering Israel
In peril, hardship, and distress,
For forty years the manna fell,
A wonder in the wilderness;
Each morn, from fruitful skies above,
The bounty on the earth was pour'd;
And daily proofs of Heavenly love
Proclaim'd the goodness of the Lord.

II.

And in our years of later time,
Shall we believe that nevermore
Is open'd up the fount sublime,
Which flow'd with miracles of yore?

Blind are the eyes that cannot see—
Dead is the heart that knows not well—
In every boon a mystery,
In every gift a miracle.

III.

For us the plenteous clouds distil
The nursing dew, the fruitful rain,
That swells the vintage of the hill,
Or feeds the corn-fields of the plain;
For us the skies pour fatness down;
For us, beyond our power of thought,
Unutter'd unperceived, unknown,
A daily miracle is wrought.

IV.

For us a world with blessings rife
Supplies the constant boons of Heaven;
Health, Reason, Love, Hope, Joy, and Life,
Are wonders wrought—are Manna given.

Lord! ope our hearts that we may feel,
Unbind our eyes that we may see,
The wondrous love Thy works reveal—
And that we perish but for Thee.

THE LAST QUARREL.

I.

THE last time that we quarrell'd, love,
It was an April day,
And through the gushing of the rain,
That beat against the window-pane,
We saw the sunbeams play.
The linnet never ceased its song,
Merry it seem'd, and free;—
"Your eyes have long since made it up,
And why not lips?" quoth he—
You thought;—I thought;—and so 'twas done—
Under the greenwood tree.

II.

The next time that we quarrel, love,
Far distant be the day,
Of chiding look or angry word!
We'll not forget the little bird
That sang upon the spray.
Amid your tears, as bright as rain
When Heaven's fair bow extends,
Your eyes shall mark where love begins,
And cold estrangement ends;—
You'll think;—I'll think;—and as of old,
You'll kiss me, and be friends.

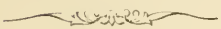
FLOWERS IN THE STREAM.

I.

What flowerets, oh river!
Fast flowing for ever,
I threw on thy bosom
In youth's early day,
Oh river! sad river
Fast flowing away!
Hope blooming brightly,
Joy springing lightly,
Love, fair as sunshine,
And born in its ray,
Oh river! sad river,
I mourn their decay!

II.

Serenely thou flowest—
Rejoicing thou goest,
While *I* stand lamenting
The summers of yore—
Oh river! sad river!
Alone on thy shore!
Love unrequited,
Hopes that are blighted,
Joys long departed
Thou canst not restore!—
Oh river! dark river!
They blossom no more!



THE MOCK JEWELS.

I.

The Pedlar stood in the morning light,
Fluent of speech and smooth was he,
And spread his wares in the public sight;—
Maranatha! and woe is me!
And he call'd to the people, surging along,
Like rolling billows when seas are strong,—
There came a dark cloud over the sky.
"Here are gauds for all to wear,
For men, for youths, for maidens fair,—
The time is passing, come and buy!"
Oh! the Pedlar!
The knavish Pedlar!

The Fiend in Pedlar's guise was he!
Selling and buying,
Cheating and lying:
Maranatha! and woe is me!

II.

"Here's a Trinket! here's a gem!
The Queen hath nothing more fair to see,
'Mid the sparkle and glow of her diadem!"
Maranatha! and woe is me!
"Buy it, and wear it, maiden fine,
Cheap love—bright love—love divine!"
There came a dark cloud over the sky!
The maiden bought it, and thought no sin;
But she found a broken heart within,
And the Pedlar cried, "Come buy! come buy!"
Oh! the Pedlar!
The knavish Pedlar!

The Fiend in human guise was he!
Selling and buying,
Cheating and lying:
Maranatha! and woe is me!

III.

"Here's a gaud for the young and bold—
Made for the generous and the free,
Redder than ruby, richer than gold!"
Maranatha! and woe is me!
"Its name is Glory!"—A youth drew near,
And bought the jewel, nor thought it dear;
There came a dark cloud over the sky!
For ere he'd placed it on his breast,
He found he'd lost his Joy and Rest,
And barter'd life for a glittering lie!
Oh! the Pedlar!
The knavish Pedlar!

The fiend in a Pedlar's guise was he,
Selling and buying,
Cheating and lying :
Maranatha ! and woe is me!

IV.

"Here's a jewel without a flaw !
Brighter and better none can be ;
Win it and wear it, and give the law,"—
Maranatha ! and woe is me !
"And its name is Riches !" With roar and shout
The people jostled and swarm'd about ;
There came a dark cloud over the sky ;
They bought the gem of worldly wealth,
And paid their Conscience and their Health—
While the Pedlar cried "Come buy ! come buy !"
Oh ! the Pedlar !
The knavish Pedlar !

The Fiend in a Pedlar's guise was he!
Selling and buying,
Cheating and lying:
Maranatha! and woe is me!

V.

In churchyards lone, in the wintry night,
The ghastly Pedlar—dim to see,
Takes his stand on the gravestones white:
Maranatha! and woe is me!
And summons the ghosts from sod and tomb,
And chuckles and grins in the midnight gloom;
Dark are the clouds upon the sky;
And sells them again his shadowy wares,
Loves, Fames, Riches, and Despairs,—
"Jewels—jewels—come and buy!"
Oh! the Pedlar!
The mocking Pedlar!

The Devil in Pedlar's guise is he;
Selling and buying,
Cheating and lying:
Maranatha! and woe is me!

GOOD NIGHT.

I.

Good night! good night!
The chimes ring loud and clear;
Good night! good night!
A new-born day is near.
Our mirth has rung, we've danced and sung,
Our eyes have gleam'd delight;
The day has pass'd, we part at last;
To each and all, Good night!

II.

Sleep! gentle sleep!
Thy robe o'er nature lies;
Sleep! gentle sleep!
Steal softly on our eyes.

And not alone to us be known
  Thy blessings calm and deep;
To pain and care be free as air,
  And soothe them, gentle sleep!

III.

Dreams! happy dreams!
  That right Life's balance wrong;
Dreams! happy dreams!
  Your kind deceits prolong.
Give poor men gold, make young the old,
  Show slaves where freedom beams;
And shed a light on sorrow's night,
  Ye recompensing dreams!

IV.

Good night! good night!
  The chimes give warning clear;
Good night! good night!
  A new-born day is near.

Our mirth has rung, we've danced and sung,
Our eyes have gleam'd delight;
The day has pass'd, we part at last;
To each and all, Good night!

HATE IN THE PULPIT.

A THUNDERER in the pulpit?—let us hear!
He cries with voice of stentor, loud and clear,
That God desires no music in His praise
But human voices upon Sabbath-days;
That art in churches is a thing abhorr'd,
And architecture odious to the Lord;
That none, who pray with other forms than he,
Shall share the blessings of Eternity.

Down, bigot, down! too proud and blind to know,
That God, who fashion'd all things here below,
Made music and the arts; that organ-tones
Are His creation; that the starry zones
And pomp of the cathedral, both alike
Were form'd by Him. Men's hands can delve or strike,

And build or overthrow; but all their power
Is God's alone. Poor creature of an hour,
Be humble and confess how small art thou!
Wouldst carry all God's wisdom on thy brow?
And in the limits of thy sect confine,
The infinite mercy of His Love divine?

Hate in the pulpit!—Down, intruder, down!
The place is holy, and thine angry frown
Sheds visible darkness on the listening throng.
Down, bigot, down! thy heart is in the wrong!
Thou art not pure;—within this place should dwell
Humility, and Love ineffable,
Self-abnegation and the tranquil mind;
And heavenly Charity, enduring, kind;
Patience and Hope, and words of gentleness!
Down to thy closet—not to curse, but bless;
And learn the law—the sum of all the ten—
That love of God includes the love of men.

"LOVE WILL FIND OUT THE WAY."

I.

Over the mountains
If Love cannot leap,
Down through the valleys
Unheeded he'll creep.
Whatever his purpose,
He'll do it or die;
And hardships and dangers
Confess it and fly.

II.

Poor as a beggar,
Yet rich as a king;
Stormy as winter,
And radiant as spring;

He's constant, he's changeful,
He's night, and he's day;
A guide who misleads us,
Yet shows us the way.

III.

Drown him in billows
Deep, deep in the main,
Light as the sea-bird
He'll float up again.
You think he has perish'd
In sleet and in showers,
He rises in sunlight,
And treads over flowers.

IV.

Lock him in darkness,
In grief, and in thralls,
Laughing to scorn you,
He'll glide through the walls.

Go chain up a sunbeam,
Or cage the wild wave;—
Then bind him with fetters,
And make him a slave!

V.

Call him not haughty—
He dwells with the poor;
Call him not feeble—
He's strong to endure;
And call him not foolish—
He governs the wise;
Nor little—he's greater
Than earth and the skies.

THE GREAT CRITICS.

Whom shall we praise?
  Let's praise the dead!—
In no men's ways
Their heads they raise,
  Nor strive for bread
With you or me,—
So, do you see?
  We'll praise the dead!
Let living men
  Dare but to claim
From tongue or pen
  Their meed of fame,

We'll cry them down,
Spoil their renown,
Deny their sense,
Wit, eloquence,
Poetic fire,
All they desire.
Our say is said,
Long live the dead!

THE SHIP

I.

A King, a Pope, and a Kaiser,
And a Queen—most fair was she—
Went sailing, sailing, sailing,
Over a sunny sea.
And amid them sat a beggar,—
A churl of low degree;
And they all went sailing, sailing,
Over the sunny sea.

II.

And the King said to the Kaiser,
And his comrades fair and free
"Let us turn adrift this beggar,
This churl of low degree;

For he taints the balmy odours
That blow to you and me,
As we travel,—sailing, sailing,
Over the sunny sea."

III.

"The ship is mine," said the beggar,—
That churl of low degree;—
"And we're all of us sailing, sailing,
To the grave, o'er the sunny sea.
And you may not, and you cannot,
Get rid of mine, or me;
No! not for your crowns and sceptres—
And my name is DEATH!" quoth he.

THOR'S HAMMER.

[The *dramatis personæ* of the following fable are well-known personages in the Scandinavian mythology. Thor is the son of Odin; his Hammer has the same virtues, and the same faculties, as the Sword of Justice in other mythologies; Loki is the spirit of evil, and contemner of the gods; and Friga, mother of Thor, is the goddess of Peace.]

I.

Once on a time,—three thousand years ago,—
Thor left the mountains where the rivers grow,
And took a journey to the world below.

Clad as a blacksmith, in his hand he bore
The avenging Hammer, forged in Heaven of yore,
And sought, far off, a city on the shore.

None knew the god: he walk'd 'mid human kind
Manlike, and stalwart as a labouring hind,
Broad-brow'd and thoughtful, and of quiet mind.

He look'd about him, pondering as he went
Through mart and haven, what the people meant,
With their pale faces, and their shoulders bent:

And what possess'd them. Lo! from every sea
Came in the hurrying ships, with white sails free,
Spread to the breeze, that fill'd them joyously.

He saw the bursting sacks of plenteous corn,
The silk and wool, and all the tribute borne
Northward, from climes beyond the fruitful morn:

Damasks and velvets, trimm'd with sable hems,
The gold, the silver, and the starlike gems,
For fair maids' bosoms, and kings' diadems.

The glowing art, the sulpture half-divine,
The oils, the spice, the fruits incarnadine,
The reeling hogsheads, lumbersome with wine.

And all the people pray'd and wrought for gold ;
The few lived sumptuously, and free, and bold,
The many toil'd in hunger and in cold :

But all sought riches ; man, and maid, and wife ;
Labour's reward, the victory after strife ;
Riches, dear riches, aim and end of life.

Great Thor was dazzled ; and he sat him down
Amid the teeming people of the town,
And doff'd his sheepskin coat and jerkin brown,

And robed himself in purple like the rest,
Hiding his mighty Hammer in his breast,
And look'd a king, in all his form and gest.

II.

Him Loki follow'd, stealthily and slow,
Loki the jesting, and incredulous foe,
That knew all evil, or aspired to know.

And when the god had prankt himself in state,
Loki did likewise, and with step elate,
Moved to his side and made obeisance great.

"Lord!" he exclaim'd, "if in this happy land
Thou art a stranger, as I understand,
Let me be near thee at thy bold right hand;

"And I will show thee what the country yields,
Better than clang of swords, and dint of shields;—
The wealth of Industry, and smiling fields.

"Is it not good that hungry War should cease,
The household virtues bloom and wealth increase,
And the world prosper in the light of peace?

"Come! let me show thee how this people thrive,
And how they live and toil, and feast and wive—
These busy workers in the human hive.

"Come to the palace I have built and stored;
Thou shalt be welcome to a kingly board,
And for thy pleasure shall the wine be pour'd.

"To give thee joy shall Beauty deck her bowers,
And twine her flowing locks with summer flowers,
And dart live sunshine through thy heart in showers.

"Thou shalt behold more wonder and delight
Than great Walhalla holds, on festal night,
When heroes drink and gods renew the fight."

And Thor went with him. On his path were strewn
Roses and lilies. Loud, in joyous tune,
Sounded the fife, the shalm, and the bassoon.

On Beauty's bosom, as it heaved in sighs,
Sparkled the jewels; sparkled loving eyes;
Sparkled the wine-cup; surged the revelries.

The god rejoiced; he quaff'd the amber wine,
And mortal beauty, to his raptured eyne,
Glow'd with a splendour equal to divine.

He laugh'd and sang; and roystering revel kept,—
Through his hot veins a drowsy pleasure crept,
And in the lap of luxury he slept.

Prone on the couch his brawny limbs he threw,—
Loki beheld—the scoffer—the untrue,—
And from his slumbering breast the Hammer drew.

He stole and vanish'd. Senseless as a stone
Slept mighty Thor, until the morning shone,
And when he waken'd—lo! he was alone.

III.

From Heaven's blue vault there dropp'd a murmur low,
From Hecla's summit crown'd with Polar snow,
Came the shrill echoes of a voice of woe.

The big rains patter'd it in bubbling drops,
The wild wind breathed it through the trembling copse
The thunder spake it to the mountain-tops ;

The deep sea moan'd it to the startled shore,—
"Eternal Justice rules the world no more,
Lost is the Hammer of avenging Thor."

Good men received the tidings, and were sad ;
The wicked heard, and reel'd about as mad.
"Ours is the world!" they said, "Rejoice—be glad!

"Ours is the world, to use it as we will ;
'Tis ours, to bind or loose—to spare or kill ;
Let us enjoy it : let us take our fill.

"Thor hath no Hammer; nerveless is his hand
To deal red vengeance o'er the joyous land,
And scatter nations, as the storms the sand.

"Rejoice, ye peoples! let the song go round,—
Kings are we all; bring wreaths that we be crown'd,
And where we tread, bestrew with flowers the ground."

Freed from the fear of Heaven's avenging wrath,
Men planted vices in the open path;
The harvest, vice; and crime the aftermath.

Fast grew, fast spread, the poisonous lust of gold;
Youth's love—as in the happy days of old—
Was given no longer,—but was bought and sold.

The young were greedy, calculating, base;
The greedier old thought nothing a disgrace
But want of money, or the loss of place.

To sin and prosper made the world a friend ;
To lie was venial,—if it served an end ;
'Twas wise to cringe ; 'twas politic to bend.

To steal for pence was dastardly and mean ;
To rob for millions, with a soul serene,
Soil'd not the fingers,—all success was clean.

Each needy villain haggled for his price ;
The base Self-worship spawn'd with every vice,—
Its love was lust, its prudence avarice ;

Its courage cruelty ; its anger hate ;
Its caution lies ;—the little and the great
Denied the gods, and dared the blows of Fate.

The Heavens grew dark with anger :—"Thor, awake!
Where is thy Hammer? Shall the gods not take
Vengeance for evil? Shall their thirst not slake?

"Where is thy Hammer, forged in Heaven of yore—
The earth is foul and rotten to the core—
Where is thy Hammer,—thou avenging Thor?"

IV.

Through the deep midnight pierced the awful word—
"Bring back thy Hammer." Earth and Heaven were
stirr'd,
And Hell's remotest depths the echoes heard.

And miserable Thor, distraught, forlorn,
Roam'd o'er the world, and held himself in scorn,
To be so foil'd by Loki, evil-born.

His quivering lips with proud impatience curl'd,
On Loki's head his bitterest curse he hurl'd,
Plague of the gods, and tyrant of the world.

"Hast thou my Hammer, Earth, or thou, oh Heaven?"
Earth spake not, nor the spheres, 'mid all their seven;
But from the wild sea-waves was answer given:—

"Thine awful Hammer slumbers in my breast;
Seek it, oh Thor! and happy be thy quest,
And free the world from rapine and unrest!"

And Thor took ship, and sail'd the stormy sea:—
"Courage and Hope, my comrades twain shall be,
Where'er ye waft me, oh ye wild winds free!

"Farewell, farewell! to all delights of yore,
To gods and heroes, and the Asgard shore,—
Without my Hammer I return no more!

"In storm, or calm, or in the treacherous mist,
The waves shall bear, and float me as they list,
And pitying Heaven shall watch me and assist!"

Northward, three days, 'mid sleet and driving rain,
The vessel sped; and north three days again
It sail'd in starlight, o'er a trackless main.

Northward, still north, three days and nights it flew,
And the shrill winds that o'er its topsails blew,
Froze into sheets of ice the heavy dew.

North—ever north! The breeze forgot to blow,
And hush'd its music in the whispering snow;
But still the vessel cleft the waves below.

North—ever north! Flapp'd out the bellying sail,
'Mid rolling icebergs and a fitful gale,
And storms of cutting sleet and rattling hail.

O'er Heaven's dark vault the darting meteors pour'd,
Like hosts in conflict—hurrying horde on horde;—
And the ice crack'd, and sudden thunders roar'd.

But Thor held on, undaunted as of old,
Through storm, and fog, and sleet, and pitiless cold,
As the ship bore him, by the gods controll'd.

Northward no more! With sudden swirl and spin,
And clash like booming of artillery's din,
The icebergs fell and broke, and hemm'd him in.

He heard a sound of laughter and of shrieks,
And saw a shadow on the frozen peaks,
That brought the warm blood to his angry cheeks.

"I know thee, Loki; but the hour draws near
When thou shalt look upon my face; and fear;—
After thy night, my morning heavenly clear."

And as he spake, there flash'd a crimson glow,
Amid the pinnacles, through berg and floe,
And cover'd all the ship from poop to prow.

And o'er the ice came tripping like a fawn,
In the clear sunlight of a rosy dawn,
When the dews glisten on the grassy lawn,

The fair-hair'd Friga, peaceful and benign,—
Her soft blue eyes stream'd forth a joy divine,
And rainbows clad her in celestial shine.

"Beneath thy keel," she said, "thy Hammer sleeps;
Plunge thou, and seize it, in the deepest deeps,
Where Loki cast it; Heaven expects and weeps."

Quick as a thought, upon the floe he sprang;
The ice divided with an iron clang,
And down he plunged, while Loki's laughter rang.

Up from the wild wave, radiant as the day,
Issued the god, and shook the icy spray
From his broad shoulders, glancing in the ray,

And held aloft the Hammer in both hands:—
"Rejoice, ye nations, and be glad, ye lands,
The throne of Justice on the hill-top stands;

"And Thor's great Hammer vindicates the Right!"
Loki fled howling, while in roseate light
The ship sail'd homeward through the gloomy night.

And Heavenly voices flew from shore to shore;
"Tremble ye wicked! Earth is yours no more;—
Found is the Hammer of avenging Thor!"

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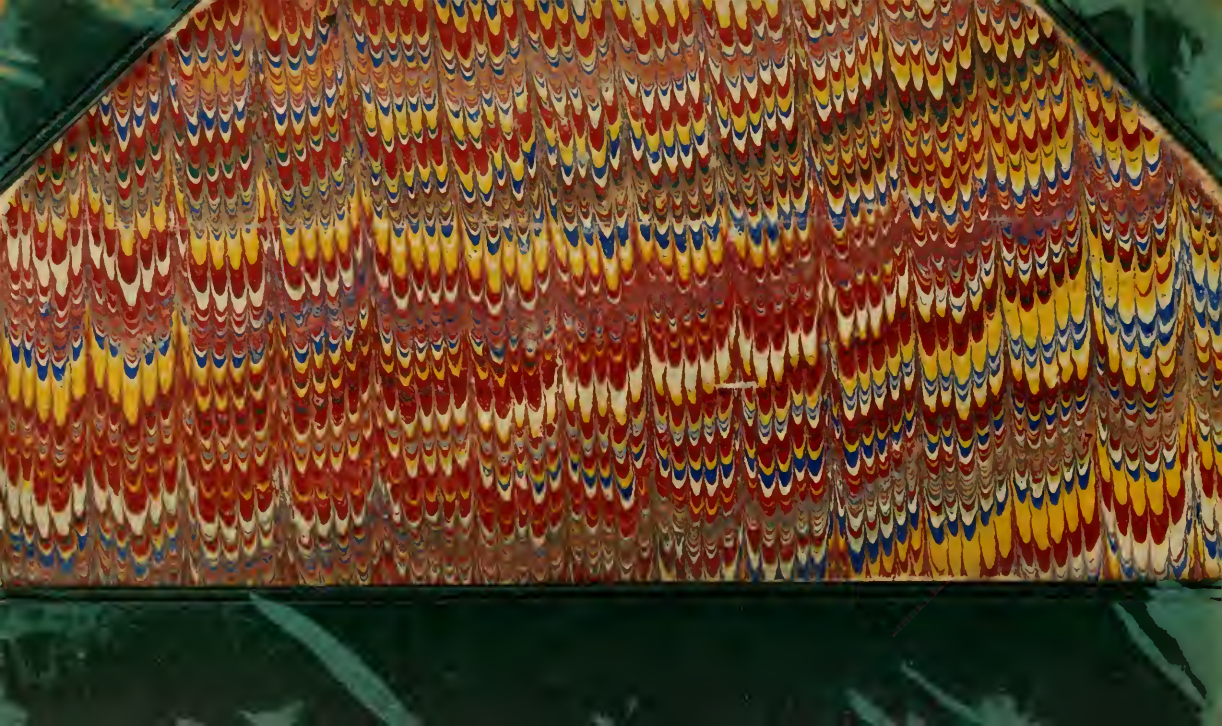
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